The Kaleidoscopic Unsaid: Voice, Memory, and Body of the Afro-Americas

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Introduction: The Kaleidoscopic Unsaid of the Afro-Americas

Discourses around African diasporic subjects in the Americas center around notions of defeat or triumph, an unrealistic binary that limits the subjects' existence and their ability to progress. If the Black subject in cultural productions is not suffering in the urban landscapes of South-Central Los Angeles, South Chicago, or the urban sprawls of Caracas, Bogotá, San Juan, or Havana, then they clearly present perfect resolution of the ideal minority, fighting the good fight against systems of oppressions. Yet Black subjects do not exist in such a binary, and those who leave (or have left) impoverished realities or who do not have the luxury of being Obama 2.0 must grapple with representation that sits in a zone that is neither triumphant nor defeatist. We, in the academy, often perpetuate these notions that exoticize the cultural productions of and by Black subjects in the name of diversity but fail to engage with the nuances within, and a broader discourse on, representation. I read the texts and films in this study in constant multiplicity, where various subjectivities and oppressions work in concert, to show how the subjects that experience a myriad existence that constantly and simultaneously negotiates, re-inscribes, and expands Eurocentric (and white) hegemonic views. I argue that in this synchronous attempt the texts allow Black subjects to de-center and chip away at the predominantly Eurocentric rhetoric by forging new paths of understanding that reflect their reality that is in itself constantly shifting, intentionally or not. My goal is to minimize the binary constructions around Black subjects in the Atlantic world, not by relegating them to a singular, stagnant representation. Instead my goal is to examine representations within the Black experience that is dynamic and reflective of several realities at once. This project seeks to reveal how cultural ideas of Blackness are not only Eurocentric in nature

but rather one that sits in the in-between that cannot be fully defined because to do so inherently limits the (self) representation. Despite the range in era, historical reality, and socio-cultural context the subjects studied in this project are all connected by an inherent negotiation (and re-inscription) defined by not explicitly stating the resistance within a global-local power matrix I like to call the kaleidoscopic unsaid.

I use the kaleidoscope as a metaphor because of the shifting continuity the tool provides. Invented by Scottish scientist David Brewster in the 19th century, this optical instrument derives its name from the Greek word *kalos* or beauty, *eidos* that which is seen, and *skopeo* to examine or observe (Brewster 1). Similar to a telescope, the elongated tool houses various speckles of multicolored glass on one end, and contains interior angled mirrors, allowing light to shine, and create different polychromatic images within the tool as the observer moves the rotating end. However, the tube remains structurally intact even as the image changes. Like the subjects in this project whose unique experience cannot be replicated in their exact state yet are all structured within the same Eurocentric global power system, the kaleidoscope allows for an articulation that is both varied and stable at once; it both diverges and reproduces the system. For the subjects in this project, the common system is one of power relations which constructs a world that privileges, to varying degrees, Eurocentric thought, racial constructs, and monied interests. But even within this system—like the colors in the kaleidoscope that shift and move within the structure of the tool—the subjects negotiate and move within the system to exert an agency that they take back themselves, redefining who they are, where they belong, and how they think of the world. In the end, this dissertation underscores the representations and negotiations of Black, Latinx, and other subaltern

subjects are not clearly delineated and in ceaseless flux. This negotiation occurs in a global-local power construct that is linked by capitalism, racial narratives, and national formations that are the legacy of colonialism across the hemisphere. I take from Anibal Quijano's notion of "coloniality of power" which looks at the continuing legacy of colonialism that has expanded its tentacles into contemporary power relations.[1] Capitalism, racial hierarchies, historical legacies, and nation-state formations converge together to emphasize the superiority of Eurocentric, and usually white or whitened, subjects over Black and Brown bodies. These power relations extend beyond the political and into ontological representations that the subjects in this project continuously negotiate. Power relations in the studied texts shift and morph whether it be the writing in Juan Francisco Manzano's *Autiobiografía de un esclavo* (1836), the legacy of trauma and memory in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2006) and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1996), or the hair, body and masculinity in Mariana Rondón's *Pelo malo* (2013) and Juan Andrés Arango's *La Playa D.C.* (2012). Yet, these cultural texts underscore the privileging of Eurocentric productions of knowledge, memorial articulations, and gender representations that Afro diasporic subjects constantly navigate through various labyrinthic circumstances. Although the kaleidoscope remains intact even within its moving realities, the subjects do not simply negotiate within this kaleidoscope to decolonize their representation, but rather they both use the tools and create new ways through the unsaid, which morphs the system for their own needs in order to expand ways of articulating the self. The global-local power dynamic that

[1] Quijano constructs his coloniality of power in his articles "Colonialidad del poder, Eurocentrismo, y América Latina" (2000) and "Colonialidad del poder y estrtificación social" (2000). I primarily take from the former since the focus on power relations is more precise given the subject matter of this dissertation.

privileges a Eurocentric view of the world has led these subjects to understand themselves in a partial way, as Quijano states, forcing the emergence of alternative ways of enunciating that writing does not, and cannot, capture allowing the unsaid to emerge.

For the unsaid I draw from John Mowitt's *Sounds: The Ambient Humanities* (2015), in which he makes the case for an addition to the "gaze" of Western academic discourse and understanding that privileges the visual over all other senses. To Mowitt, the gaze is limited by its "afterwardness" that registers meaning following the observation rather than in the moment of occurrence. His aim is not to delegitimize sight but rather be additive to what he calls the "audit" (1-5). Together, the "gaze" and the "audit" form a more complete understanding, one less exclusively dependent on vision (Western) and more dependent on sound (subaltern) that better articulates non-western experiences. Mowitt uses sounds as a way to expand understanding beyond immediate problems, and asserts that sound allows us to question "not how we situate sounds but how sounds situate situating? How do sounds stir us to recognize situating as a problem?" (13). By looking at the enunciations not directly stated throughout the cultural productions of this project, this understanding of the senses allows for a decolonization and destabilization of the power schema to emerge because the unsaid allows us to reconsider "situating" these subjects into one representation. I emphasize the unsaid in this project (over the unseen) because, although these subjects function within the schema, the texts in this project resist the power matrix by using maneuvers that are not solely guided by the Eurocentric focus of power. Thus, the unsaid creates a space of ontological resistance to expand, and not to limit, the existence of the subjects studied. The unsaid of these texts allows for the subjects to move between and beyond the power

matrix by constantly showing a malleability of the self and their plight to slowly decolonize the way they are represented.

Like Mowitt's suggestion that sight is limiting, so too is the kaleidoscope as a metaphor due to its focus on the visual (in its literal sense), and because of the continuity its structure requires (all images and color variations stem from the tool itself). By both reusing and recreating—a proposition that is less exciting than the triumphant narratives posed by many academics and within popular culture—a reflection of minoritized subjects is more broadly articulated. The unsaid becomes a recognition that the world is not white or Black, or just based on winners and losers, but is instead composed of many shades of gray and people who simply just keep abjectly moving forward in a constant attempt to survive. The unsaid provides for the expansion of understanding in that if you situate this project unilaterally into one context it becomes unhinged, incongruent, unfaithful to the reality that is constantly shifting and amorphous like the subjects studied. While the cultural productions are by or of Black subjects, the way in which they maneuver the world differs greatly, as to reflect the reality they face. At once existential, memorial, and bodily they all attempt a resistance through what is not necessarily silent, but certainly is not explicitly stated, in order to find a representation that best, yet not wholly, articulates their experience.

In this dissertation I reflect upon W.E.B. DuBois' veil, Paul Gilroy's ships, Christina Sharpe's wakes, and Dixa Ramírez's ghostings as types of unsaid in which each thinker tries to recuperate the erasures and silences that have been imposed on Black subjects. While they are not the only scholars, this dissertation seeks to expand the vestiges left behind and still emerge within the Black Atlantic. Thus, similar to these

thinkers, the unsaid takes on various definitions through the three chapters because it is inherently different to the various subjects studied. Manzano declares himself a writer through his writing while maintaining a distance to his presumably white abolitionist audience using secrets to control the narrative. The legacy of trauma for the characters in Díaz and Danticat's novels show how for Black subjects the trauma of the past is not complete but a continuous Event that is difficult to distinguish from political, gendered, and historical atrocities. Ultimately, the unsaid emerges through their memorial articulations as to not pin down one trauma, but to showcase them simultaneously. For the characters in *La playa D.C.* and *Pelo malo*, Tomás and Junior modify their hair while understanding the oppression that surrounds them but resisting and re-inscribing the power relations at once. Thus, showing how for these subjects there are no clear maneuvers that leads to triumph, ultimately re-establishing Eurocentric ideas of beauty. For these three case studies, one thing remains the same: the simultaneous re-inscription and resistance that permeates these texts.

Thus, I attempt to deconstruct the fixed notions of subjectivity that writing cannot articulate and emerge through the unsaid. By looking at the written form as a voice in Manzano's text, memory in Díaz and Danticat's texts, and the body in the films, the unsaid deconstructs the imposed subjugations and forces readers and viewers to think beyond the spoken to reveal agency and oppression simultaneously, creating a multifaceted subject that is neither wholly perfect nor wholly negated. Along this vein of the unsaid, I take from Jacques Derrida's idea of *différance* where the meaning of a concept, word, idea, or structure is differed both in meaning and in substance from its initial iteration. To Derrida, *différance* is neither a word nor a concept but a semantic

argument to make a broader point that deconstructs power relations. Although I acknowledge the problematics of using a white European theorist alongside several post-colonial Latin American scholars, Derrida's broader construction is instrumental in how meaning is constantly shifting and cannot be pinned down in a singular form. This construct allows for a suspension of meaning that is liberating and de-colonizing so as not to be dependent on Eurocentric hegemonic definitions, but rather dependent on definitions that come out from the communities themselves. Now, it is not lost on me that the theorist, and many of the ones used in this work, are predominantly white and using these theorists becomes an act of re-inscribing these power dynamics that are often so crippling. With that, I attempt to move away from finding essentialist notions of the self-articulation within minoritized populations and try to find broader forces at play, acknowledging the re-inscription that sits along the resistance. The kaleidoscopic unsaid in these cultural productions provides a perpetuity, or "becoming" to use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's term, in their negotiation of the power relations in any given context. While some might find a contraction both in the metaphor used—a visual with an aural—along with the theorists —Quijano with Deleuze, Guattari, and Derrida— this "contradictory" way in which Black and other minoritized bodies have been articulated and continue to articulate the self, highlights how they are often illegible to the world and use the unsaid to be read, seen, and heard.

Therefore, the kaleidoscopic unsaid is both linked to a global system that it is also trying to deconstruct—a paradox to some but a reality to the minoritized subjects that constantly live this very existence. The meaning across countries, concepts, and subjects shifts and changes perpetually "becoming" new while also deferring the meaning that

cannot be pinned down into one strict concept. Therefore, the meaning is in a state of continuous change yet linked to another. The kaleidoscope shifts and changes while maintaining the same Eurocentric power relations, and the unsaid expands and maneuvers, revealing how the characters and individuals studied battle the forces that oppress, while also re-inscribing as Junot Díaz says, "link by link by link." This continuous fixity is important to note because it does not inherently decolonize the power structure these subjects find themselves in but rather perpetuates the system while still combating it in unsaid ways. This contradiction is how they survive the world they face in order to be heard, have agency, and attempt to move away from power structures that define them through fixed and one-dimensional terms.

The Global and the Local

Racial articulations become a central point of elaboration for this project since race is a power relations, especially in the formation of states, where those with power form the nation (and racial rhetoric) in the image of the mighty. Racial relations sit at the heart of the kaleidoscope because Eurocentric views of race are central to the delegitimization and negation of Black bodies throughout the hemisphere. These hierarchies that are produced privilege Eurocentric, and usually white, subjects at the expense of Black and Brown bodies depending on location. The Blackness of the U.S., let's say, is not the same as Blackness in Cuba, Hispaniola, Venezuela, or Colombia, complicating fixed ideas of racial narrations within nation-states. Yet the privileging of whitened subjects remains the same even when the iterations look differently in various contexts. This along with the transitory nature of subjects in the 20th and 21st centuries, further muddles notions of race that are stagnant. The kaleidoscopic metaphor allows for

the fluidity of context, as well as the fixity of the Eurocentric power structure that these subjects navigate. The mobility of the optical lens aptly captures the shifting reality with the oppression power schema they live.

The vestiges of European colonialism inform a more contemporary idea of the racial, national, and regional power constructions of Latin American subjects. In his essay "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" (2000), Anibal Quijano concisely explains the global problem that oppresses Latin American constructions of identity. He demonstrates how the global capitalist emergence positioned power, both cultural and economic, in Europe. Due to this consolidation, the system managed to divide the world into two spheres, one that was European, and the other that encompassed the rest of the "inferior world"—among these being Africa, Latin America and Asia. This consolidation—which constituted a myriad of cultures, peoples, and languages—becomes oppressive, stripping people of their authentic cultures and placing them into identities that are filtered through European constructs. A power matrix was constructed that places European (white) phenotypes and economic norms at the top with mixed race (mestizo) and Black bodies at the bottom.[2] Together this constituted a hierarchy that went beyond simple phenotypical oppressions and into all aspects of life including, thought and cultural productions. What emerged was a whitewashing of cultures, creating a tragedy that makes Latin Americans continue being what they are not, "and as a result we can never identify our true problems, much less resolve them, except in a partial and distorted

[2] It is important to note that thinkers like José Martí (1898), José Vasconcelos (1925), and Fernando Ortiz (1940) advocated for the same construct of *mestizaje* that defines the region. By doing this, they begin yet do not complete, to decolonize the relationship to Eurocentric ideas of the self, replicating a whitened reality. This project concedes that the constructions of race in the region defined by *mestizaje* are important, yet it also re-inscribes the privileging of whiteness, especially for Afro-descendant subjects.

way.

way" (556). Quijano manages to capture the incomplete nature that defines the regional experience and articulates the way in which Latin Americans relay their own identity to maintain the global order for economic reasons rather than pure self-articulation. Thus, Quijano's focus is on the power structure that persists on issues of race, nation, identity and economics that converge in this system. In the following chapters, I will show how the kaleidoscopic unsaid delves with the incongruencies found in these racial constructs, allowing for the shifting reality that the region lives. For Manzano we see how the edits by Madden and Del Monte re-inscribe the power dynamics within Manzano's writing and the academic critiques of the 20th and 21st centuries. In the case of Díaz and Danticat, they articulate their continuous traumas through writing in an intellectual system that does not necessarily understand their experience. Moreover, for Junior and Tomás we see how hair becomes the site for their oppression based on the phenotypical markers that make them inferior. In these cases, I show how the kaleidoscopic lens shifts, showing the various iterations of the Eurocentric dominations in varied contexts. The power is not limited to their phenotypes but also epistemic and gendered that rotate like the kaleidoscope further complicating the subjects.

The kaleidoscope can be seen in the various ways the countries in Latin America construct national and racial categorization that stem from the European traditions of their former colonizers. Quijano engages with race as a construction of power by the dominant (white) colonizers in order to exert their authority over the inferior (Brown/Black) populations and acknowledges that these phenotypical markers are "inventions" (203).[3] In this project, the phenotypical markers that are racial and national

[3] Similarly, American sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant's define race as "a concept, a representation or signification of identity that refers to different types of human bodies, to the end

formations shift and emerge in different depictions, but the power relations remain the same, privileging white (or whitened) racial and cultural norms over others. The unsaid thus emerges as both the way that these national formations both resist and re-inscribe the articulations through rhetoric that have no satisfying endings. In so doing, a multi-dimensional reality begins to emerge that adequately represents the region, its people, and their articulation in a fluid and inclusive ways, slowly chipping away at the power structures.[4] These social constructions reproduce economic and social hierarchies by imprinting meanings of inferiority on people of color. One cannot separate how past constructions of race as biological and the discourse of such ideas have infiltrated the ways in which race, even as a social construct, is structured today. Moreover, examining the local-global connection in constructions of race is important to help dissect the one-dimensional macro North American constructions of race that are disrupted by transnational subjects and adding to the multiplicity inherent in the Atlantic world.[5]

Racial and national constructs in Latin America and the Caribbean still incorporate problematic traditions that subjugate certain members of the nation while privileging others. The forces that create a nation link the past and the present as to produce a "collective narrative" (Balibar 93). All national constructs look to the past to

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perceived corporeal and phenotypic markers of difference and the means and social practices that are ascribed to those difference" (111).

[4] I take here from Ramon Grosfoguel and his explanation on the differences between "colonialism" and "coloniality" where after the change in colonial administrations across the globe in the 20th century one sees an epistemic and power continuation that stem from the "classical colonialism" in what Grosfoguel deems coloniality ("The implicaions of Subaltern Epistemologies for Global Capitalism: Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality").

[5] In "The Latinamericanization of American Racial Stratification in the U.S." (2008) sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David Dietrich examine how at a national (macro) level U.S. racial discourse still is impacted by a traditional binary construct while at local (micro) levels a stratification similar to Latin America is emerging. It is important to note this distinction since racial narrative are constantly shifting as I a explain in this dissertation.

make sense of the present and in these formations they integrate certain subjects while rejecting others along these national discourses. And, like nation, race functions similarly where groups are clumped together in a way that is fabricated based on phenotypical markers that have meaning, both good and bad, rather than necessarily having interconnected cultural traits. Etienne Balibar's concept is instrumental since all these community creations are imaginary, even when these imagined nations are real. He states, "Every social community reproduced by functioning of institutions is imaginary… But it comes down to accepting that, under certain conditions, only imaginary communities are real" (93). Latin America and the Caribbean also construct race and nation along these lines, but certain historical and societal implications do emerge. In essence, the *how* in relation to the nation is the same, but the *what* of racial and national construction is what changes regionally. Moreover, Quijano discusses how the nation-state formation in Latin America, like all nation state formations, is a power structure that impacts various areas like economic production, gender, and violence (226). Quijano shows how in the region the creation of the nation-state was a Eurocentric importation underscoring the remaining legacy of colonialism past the times of independence. He emphasizes that these power structures were set up to maintain a power system that benefited mostly white landholders and created a system of homogenization for a heterogenous population. In this homogenization the weak are folded based on the standards of the powerful maintaining the same power system as before (226-8). Thus, when seen in racial terms, whiteness is privileged over Black bodies to maintain a schema that protects both Eurocentric capital and cultural norms. This framework extends to the region itself, which especially perpetuate these systems of oppression for subjects

that move between subjectivities, such as the subject studied in this project in the Dominicans and Haitian's transnational contexts, enslaved people's presence, and the duality in Black citizen's hair. Issues of race prove to not be contained only in the tidy constructs of the nation-state but also among regional interchanges.

It is under that racial hierarchical structure where the unsaid emerges for the subjects of this project. The structure that was created under colonialism and then extended into the regional integration of the 19th century and into the 20th century shows a need to articulate the self in a context that was created to privilege the Eurocentric cultural production of some over the Black and brown bodies of the region. For Black subjects, this becomes a need to discuss what Eduard Glissant calls a "forced poetics" where the need to speak one's reality is met by the inability to have the tool at your disposal. Black writers use a variety of methods that provide for the agency in their writing that disrupts the power system— as in the case of Manzano—while also articulating the more unknown elements of trauma—as in the case of Díaz and Danticat. Manzano at times purposely holds back information of his existence to create an unknown, and unsaid, level of authority for the writers. Díaz and Danticat complicate memory for Black subjects because of the ongoing trauma their characters experience, along with varied gender and political atrocities that cannot be unlinked. In these cases, the unsaid provides the characters and subjects an outlet to speak their existence. The kaleidoscopic unsaid reflects the global-local connection along with the various meanings behind intended enunciations that are in constant flux.

The Fluid Local

Like the glass spectacles in the kaleidoscope, the subjects and contexts studied in this project provide for constant change and negotiation still linked to the broader national and global constructs. The old colonial structure has given way to a coloniality in the present continued by academic discourse (as in the case of Manzano), the transnational context (Díaz and Danticat), and in Afro-Latin American realities (the two films) where the hierarchy remains and the subjects presented combat and re-inscribe these power relations that still benefit a Eurocentric view of the world. To this end, Ramon Grosfoguel comments on the fact that minoritized subjects fall either within a European form of thinking or within a subaltern form of thinking that still privileges the global power structure that they reside in. He notes, "The fact that one is socially located in the oppressed side of power relations does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location" (6). To his point, assuming that all people of color are either triumphing or losing the power relation is problematic since it only serves to re-inscribe the hegemonic ontological expectations on these bodies, imposing ideas of progress that stem from the West. Grosfoguel goes on to say, "The disembodied and unlocated neutrality and objectivity of the ego-politics of knowledge is a Western myth" (6). To say all the subjects studied in this project fully overcome the power relations is not true; however, they all accomplish a straddling between two systems that, although created and maintained by former colonial structures, challenge the binary by writing, being unstable, and taking back old ways of domination. In this act of duality these subjects decolonize their world by not merely falling in line but rather by breaking up the one-dimensionality of the hegemonic power system. This in itself is a shift, albeit a less appealing one from the revolutionary strides academia adulates.

Therefore, moving towards a more flexible idea of subjectivity breaks up traditionally fixed hierarchies of power that are predicated on singular European hegemonic cultural productions. Black subjects in the Atlantic world have a unifying experience in their ancestors' trauma from the middle passage, as scholars like Paul Gilroy and Sadiya Hartman have articulated, that reflect the broader Black experience. Yet this experience is not seen in the same way throughout the region and by the subjects studied in this project and is muddled with additional subjugations that cannot be ignored. It is important again to see the kaleidoscope in its limiting form because of the specific contexts that give the various Black experiences both globally, and certainly in this project, variety and difference that reshuffle the hegemony of being Black in the diaspora. The Caribbean and the African diaspora provide for a platform to look at how movement and space come together to create a perpetually shifting notion of identity. In *Poetics of Relations* (1990), Edouard Glissant discusses how one needs to understand the Caribbean through the lens of movement and space breaking traditional notions of what the Caribbean truly is defined by and underscores how the movement is constantly evolving and has no fixed source of origin. Glissant argues that movement *is* what makes up a large part of the Caribbean psyche and physical location is of little importance and is instead the constant ebb and flow that is the Antillean experience. The contemporary experience of the Hispanic Caribbean provides for a new and forward-thinking ways in which this lack of fixity impacts the notion of Caribbean subjects. Nations like Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba highlight the fracture in nation-state formations for populations that are not strictly divided by national borders but exchange and reimagine their true national identity.

Under these shifting parameters one must contend with how bodies are racially read within any given context to shed light on how those who move beyond borders interact with their surroundings. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant say, "bodies are visually read and narrated in ways that draw up an ensemble that draws up symbolic meanings and associations" (121). Bodily readings further underscore the fixity in sight within Western ways of knowing limiting the ways in which subaltern subjects are able to articulate their subjectivity that is less fixed and more fluid in nature. Cultural markers are imprinted on bodies, subjects that enter and leave different constructs and rhetoric must face the various realities of race. Places like the Caribbean or the U.S.-Mexico border build identities in ways that are not static but are defined by a fluidity that Western discourse does not quite comprehend. Gloria Anzaldúa's chapter "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" succinctly captures the duality of these liminal subjects by saying:

> The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality. She operates in a pluralistic mode— nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (101)

Anzaldúa's praise of the mestiza reality shifting the power relation by asserting her own decolonized existence without the unnecessary pretext of the power structure. She breaks the epistemological barriers by including poetry and mixing working-class Spanish and standard academic English throughout her text. Additionally, her usage of the imagery of

the river as an identity that is always flowing and her staunch stance of being able to hold various identities is very compelling and reflect the fluidity that is seen in the Caribbean.

Thus, these shifting existences are impacted by migrations to the US with its binary racial discourse. Subjects that come to the US, like Haitians and Dominicans, are racialized through this lens that seemingly only has Black and white. Add the fact that these people move between the countries never settling into one completely both underscores their racial narratives and puts into question the singularity of racial discourse in both regions. Does the racial binary in the US dominate or does the racial spectrum of Latin America prevail? In short, neither formation wins the day. But the ability to hold these conflicting viewpoints and realities is what allows for the kaleidoscope to work, never completing itself but morphing and challenging the hegemonic racial constructions. The kaleidoscopic unsaid contends with the reality of the hegemonic power at play yet allows for a malleability in the reality these minoritized subjects experience, both connecting and disrupting the knowledge power in which they reside. It does not just occur racially but also in their thought that presents and asserts their reality decolonizing the way the subjects studied engage with the world. This "border thinking" as Walter Mignolo says, allows for a duality to exist in continuation, not one that is limited by the national border but among several epistemic systems and ways of knowing.[6] The subjects studied in this project embody that same border thinking in the way they shift and move through the global power structure, be it gendered, racial,

[6] Mignolo discusses his idea of border thinking where populations not from the Greco-Latin tradition are forced into a world that is unilateral and does not fully encompass their reality. The subjects, such as the native people of Africa and the Americas are forced to contend with an existence that is silenced through the dominant ways of knowing forcing them to both understand the power structure but also acknowledge their own traditions, thus creating a "border thinking."

classed or epistemic, underscoring their understanding of the shift, regardless of intent, and slowly decolonizing the their subjugation. Their fluidity is highlighted by the kaleidoscope since it is both different and the same, acknowledging their struggle and triumph.

The kaleidoscopic unsaid provides a framework that allows for multiple subjectivities, cultures, voices, nations, languages, and struggles to merge together in order to articulate dynamic subjects. The kaleidoscope highlights the shifting reality of Manzano, Díaz and Danticat's characters, and Tomás and Junior to be read (and heard) without omitting the other existences that also defines their reality. The unsaid provides them with an agency that stems from their own existence, not imposed by outside political forces, while also elucidating their inherent complexity by adding a layer(s) of meaning that moves beyond words. The voice, memory, and body that we see in this project serve as examples rather than definitions a kaleidoscopic unsaid exposes since in a different time, in a different context, and for different subjects this framework can look wholly changed. Modern day sex trafficking, traumas from environmental disasters, and reimagined beauty standards would make the kaleidoscopic unsaid look quite different, but these minoritized subject's existence remains a constantly shifting myriad of realities articulated from within and beyond the tools given.

The characters and subjects in this project they constantly move and shift within their reality as to further complicate the unsaid. Manzano is fully aware of the political purpose of his benefactors Del Monte and Madden while also has his own agenda throughout his *Autobiografía*. For him, these two, but not exclusive, agendas are weaved and shifted in order to assert himself as a writer. These characters shift and move the

power construct forcing the power relations to be navigated and the rules to be changed like the shifting lens of the kaleidoscope. Similarly, Belicia Cabral and Oscar de Leon in *Oscar Wao* navigate the land minds that are faced as transnational subjects between the Dominican Republic and the U.S., weaving in and out of power relations that are at times contradictory. For Junior in *Pelo malo* he faces shifting gendered and racial norms where he navigates through his hair to an ultimate defeat, echoing the shifting power in both the novels and Manzanos life writing. Within these shifting power dynamics the unsaid again emerges and these characters and subjects are forced to find less restrictive and bound ways to articulate their realities. The unsaid emerges as a way that allows for them to articulate the inherent fluidity of their reality without limiting their trauma in order to fit the Eurocentric power schema of their context. Thus, the unsaid unbinds these characters to the strict power relations of the West and opens up new ways of articulations and understanding that ultimately decolonize, albeit slowly, the rigidity of the power structure.

The Nexus of Shifting Gendered and Racialized Performance

The characters in this project are not solely limited by the racial power structure but also by the way gender is enunciated within this schema. In particular the characters in the two novels and the films negotiate the power relations as to allow for the unsaid to emerge as well. The kaleidoscope then is not just a racialized metaphor but one that underscores the various power relations that set out to oppress subaltern subjects. Like race, gender is constructed in such a way that is meant to benefit some at the expense of many, also enduring similarly Eurocentric imposed expectations. Shifting the kaleidoscope lens again, one begins to see how gender suffers from the same relations not

instead of, but in addition to, race further complicating and articulating a multiple subjectivity. The global power construction stems into many different arenas, economic and religious for instance, but the gendered expectations become ones that are fluid and based on the same power dynamics as much as race and nation, ultimately resisting and re-inscribing these power structures.[7] Like race and nation, gender is pinned to white, European, masculinist ideas that places the man, and male traits, at the top and subjugates and reduces women, and traits that are deemed feminine, to an inferior status. Thus, gender and sexuality emerge as an additional articulation because gender and sexuality are intimately linked to external factors in a such a way the inner voice and the external exploration are fused.

Although Quijano is aware throughout his essay of how the Eurocentric power dynamics extend into gender norms to oppress women in particular, Maria Lugones pushes against the patriarchal reality that still permeates his writings. In her essay "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/ Modern Gender System" (2007) Lugones criticizes how the Quijano's "coloniality of power" is predicated on heteronormative power relations that not only oppress women but members of the LGBTQ community. While she agrees with Quijano's broader understanding of power in relation to domination of some bodies, she pushes back against his hegemonic understanding of gender that creates a binary based on ill-conceived biological markers that supports this power dynamic (189-90). Lugones explores how these gendered norms are based on patriarchal power systems that are not inherent to humanity as seen by the research of Paula Gunn Allen

[7] Immanuel Wallerstein's "world system's theory" connects the broader power dynamic on a global scale that emerges from European traditions. He emphasizes that the power system stems from colonial/European roots. This is a point that many post-colonial scholars, including Mignolo and Grosfuguel, have used to take on their commentary of the system.

who shows how pre-Colombian American natives who allow for a "third sex" in their gender constructs (198-201). Lugones makes similar critiques with Oyérinké Oyewumí's "invention of women" in Africa as being oppressed by both European constructions of womanhood and their colonial political reality that oppresses them on two fronts (196-198). Finally, Lugones criticizes the mostly white feminists who neglect to understand intersectional power dynamics because they do not face oppression beyond their gender, a point that is complicated by women of color (203). These various ways gender is engrained in the Eurocentric power matrix continues in the vain of Quijano while still acknowledging the exclusions of gender and sexuality in theorizations that also need to be understood. Constructions of gender allow for a fuller representation of minoritized subjects and an understanding that their subjectivity is more fluid and complex beyond singular frameworks of being just Black or Latinx. The characters in chapters two and three navigate not only a racialized reality but are forced to contend with their gender as well, muddling the power matrix as not allow them to distinguish which problem they are navigating. What remains clear with the characters in the novels, and for Tomás and Junior, is that they need to respond carefully in order to survive. The unsaid emerges for these gendered dynamics in various ways that reflect both the shifting power structure of the kaleidoscope along with the unsaid methods they use to cope. For instance, Belicia's beating of her children leads to the continuation of the trauma she experienced, while Junior's desire to straighten his har are both attempts by each character to acquiesce the system through the body yet do not solve their problem.

Moreover, the novels and the films show how performance of gender and sexuality is not an action that is exercised without the consciousness of the social reality

where it is produced or how this performance straddles this strange line between expressing the self and "repudiating" the society that promotes a heteronormative, patriarchal, and Eurocentric social norm. In the "Phantasmatic Identification and the Assumption of Sex" (1993) Judith Butler discusses the negotiations that occurs within sexual and gender performativity noting that it is not a zero-sum game. Although sex and gender are often times conflated together, these negotiations of the two are linked to the social codes that are given to people. The performance is then not just done by the subject but also given to the subject. The negation of one code for another is not necessarily the solution, but Butler states, "The identification shift does not necessarily mean that one identification is repudiated for another; the shifting may well be one sign of hope for the possibility of avowing an expansive set of connections" (80). Similar to Lugones' critique of the lack of visibility for intersex subjects, Butler opens up the idea that there are opportunities beyond fixed gender norms and in her book *Undoing Gender* (2004) where she includes transgender by showing the problematics of how transpeople break the binary notion of gender and sexuality. However, Butler notes that within these constructions there are vestiges of the oppressions that cannot be known and are carried with subjects regardless of their intent. For this project gender and race are then performed in such a way for these subjects that they produce an unsaid. In the second chapter we see how the Black female body is a site of male dominance with expectations that are there to serve at the mercy at the "white" male power holders. The Black female body is a location where layers of historical oppression and intersection subjugations come together to reflect a raw reality for Black subjects globally.

Just like the Black female body in the second chapter, for Black men in the third chapter exploring these multiple layers of class, race, gender, and sexuality become even more convoluted in world that defines these various categories in such a way that does not allow for flexibility or mobility. As E. Patrick Johnson points out the notion of Black culture is not something that can be defined or that is fixed but rather, "...the mutual constructing/deconstructing, avowing/disavowing, and expanding/delimiting dynamic that occurs in the production of Blackness is the very thing that constitutes "Black" culture" (2). To Johnson, Blackness becomes a performance that must constantly be assessed and that cannot be pinned down into one singular definition. Black men must then perform both race, gender, and their sexual exploration simultaneously with the imposition of white heteronormative traits infiltrating their journey. Black men's sexuality is stereotyped as being overly manly or as rapists, and the pathologization of Black men's sexuality is a construct that stems from white hegemonic culture's imposition of identities (hooks 126). Black men who have sex with other men are often portrayed in the media as a threat to women of color and women more broadly, stemming from a historical notion linking Black males to sexual prowess (Han 233). These perceptions, or inscriptions, all stem from the same global power dynamic that emerged during the colonial era and continue today. This imposition assumes that white masculinity is the universal notion of manhood therefore cannot, and should not, be changed to accommodate other realities (Riofrio 24). These impositions are not explicitly stated to Black men, but the society inculcates them to navigate their explorations in a way that forces them to keep silent and not speak.

However, the various mechanisms chosen by the young Black adolescents in chapter three is not without meaning, combining intentional silences and imposed silences that produces an unsaid. Natasha Tinsley in "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic" (2008) discusses the omission of Black queer critique within broader theorizations of both Black Studies and Queer Studies and notes that these experiences have always existed even if people do not talk about them. Instead, Black queer history's "connections and crosscurrents look to speak through the washed landing, the multiply effaced identities of the Middle Passage" (211-12). Queer explorations for the Black Atlantic emerge similarly to memory and articulation of slavery and the slave trade in that they arise through a silenced past. In this project, Belicia Cabral's body in *Oscar Wao* recognizes the oppressive system while she tries to move past the traumas that have been experienced. For Tomás, he understands the need for economic gain and sees his hair as a viable way out that also reestablishes masculinist behavior. For Junior, the system controls his body and he must change his hair to survive. For these two chapters the gendered, Black, traumatized body articulates without directly stating their reality, underscoring a bodily unsaid that is often oppressive (and sometimes triumphant) for minoritized subjects. In the same fashion that the voice opens up a resistance and memory explores varied oppressions, this dissertation looks to destabilize notions of Blackness and gender through the unsaid that are ever present.

Chapter Summaries

What follows are three interconnected case studies from the Grand Caribbean focusing on Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti (along with their diasporas), Venezuela, and Colombia that show how the world system permeates their reality while

the subjects simultaneously resist it through the unsaid. Francisco Manzano, the characters in Danticat and Díaz texts, and Junior and Tomás show how negotiations of power serve to decolonize realities from the past and give the subjects studied an agency for the future. The first chapter begins by engaging with voice, presence, and academic struggle in Manzano's life and work. The kaleidoscope then shifts, revealing the racialized, gendered, and classed articulation through memory for the character's in Díaz and Danticat's novels. Finally, the kaleidoscope zooms out to expose the gendered and racial negotiations of Tomás and Junior. The constant movement in this project highlights the constant movement in the subjectivity and experience of people of color emphasized by the subjects studied in this project.

Chapter One, "Finding Voice, Making Sound: Self Articulation in Juan Francisco Manzano's *Autobiografía de un esclavo* (1836)" examines the discourse around Manzano's famed text in the North American academy. Although a poet in his own right prior to the publishing of his autobiography, this text over the course of time has taken on a life of its own and shows the continuation of colonial discourse within the North American academy. The autobiography is different from other narratives of enslaved people at the time, specifically in the North American and the Anglophone worlds, in that it is not just a mere accounting of his life. Manzano weaves his telling with explanations, secrets, analysis, self-perception, and poetics that elevates him from an enslaved person to a writer. Yet, as many critiques point out, his text has been heavily redacted by Venezuelan abolitionist Juan Del Monte and English medical doctor John Madden who either changed the content of his work or changed the manner of his voice through heavy-handed edits that, in the end, continued the physical mutilation of this man onto his work.

This unfortunate reality has been heavily studied and many scholars, mostly in the US, lament the fact that his work has been changed, they continue the same epistemic mutilations that they claim to try to move against. Yes, Manzano's work has been forever morphed, reflecting not the man but an enslaved person who even in death must endure his subaltern reality, the analysis on his text assumes that there was another way for his self-articulation. That Manzano could have gone to one of the many publishing houses in the Spanish-speaking world and asked to be read along with other 19th-century writers of his day was impossible. They lament the fact that his work is mimetic and that it only copies the writing styles of his era. They lament the fact that his writing was so riddled with grammatical errors, run-on sentences, and questionable anecdotes that his text becomes unreadable to a general audience. They fail to realize that Manzano did not have a second option, that the product that we see today, in the 21st century, is in its totality a portrait of a man showing his reality.

In this chapter, I show how Manzano's narrative techniques showed an ingenious way to recapture his self-articulation even as it is muddied by white men, and then later privileged academics. The assumption in the analysis behind these discussions is that Manzano, a Black enslaved person, was a passive victim as the world went on and negotiated the terms of his text. In this supposition, we see that because of Manzano's subjectivity there was no other way to self-represent, yet compared to other texts of his time, the man's life story, and his literary maneuvers throughout his text we see that simply is not the case. By evaluating his text as a literary work within the broader *testimonio* discourse we can see how the writer exerted his agency through certain unsaid techniques. Although the kaleidoscope shows a power structure of coloniality in the

world through the academic discussions, I examine how in reality the text was an intellectual resistance the whole time. Manzano played within the system that was oppressing him while also obtaining his freedom and had several works to his name. We see how he negotiated this for his own ends straddling two realities and highlighting his own abilities. Like the other subjects studied in this project, Manzano negotiates within his reality in order to show his own presence. So, through echo of this unsaid, Manzano exerts his agency decolonizing global expectations of his presence.

While Chapter One focuses on the recapturing of voice and presence in Juan Francisco Manzano's autobiography, Chapter Two "The Nexus of Black Memory: The Multilayered and Historical Traumas in Afro-Caribbean Diasporic Subjects" examines how Afro-Latinx writers negotiate past and present traumas within a transnational context. Focusing on Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2006) and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1996) I expose how Díaz and Danticat's text complicate ideas of historical memory for Black subjects in the Atlantic world. Although usually studied within a linear historical construct, memory proves to be a multidirectional reality, as Michael Rothberg notes, in that it is influenced by many factors, both past and present simultaneously. I use Rothberg's construction to expand notions of memory for Black subjects in that the trauma is still ongoing. Some scholars point to the reality of past traumas existing in the present, I show how for Black subjects this ever-present past is not a metaphor but a real material and structural forms. For them, the power structures that led to the sins such as the Middle Passage, slavery, the Parsley Massacre, or Apartheid in South Africa are all connected to global structure of oppression that still exists today, not metaphorically but in reality. The characters in Díaz's novel

show how the intergenerational, intersectional, and transnational traumas are all linked together, not being defined by a single moment but a long arch throughout history that haunts and exists into the present.

Yet, it is not just the historical trauma of past atrocities that continues in the lives of these characters but also the contemporary trauma of being racialized, gendered, and classed subjects that take on an intersectional reality. For both texts, being a woman and being poor come together to highlight the unjust realities that also cause traumas for these people. The global power structure is not just about race; it is also economic, political, and gendered, stemming from Eurocentric power relations that continue today. So, the subjects in the text of these two novels break ideas of trauma by showing how it is both palimpsestic and historical in a way that moves away from simply a historical trauma and towards one that is also in the present and shifting. The kaleidoscopic unsaid emerges in this chapter by showing how the characters in these novels negotiate a historical past they do not fully understand but that is still a present and contemporary trauma that is difficult to pin-down and ever-oppressive. The "Nexus of Black Trauma" exposes a site that at once articulates the vestiges of the past ancestors and the contemporary hurt of today in a way that complicates the reality; one cannot fully separate what is past and what is present in a real material construct not one based on metaphors.

Finally, Chapter Three, "The Duality in the Black Male Body," moves over to the bodily reality of these unsaid practices. While Chapter Two looks, in part, on the Black female body, Chapter Three explores the Black male body and hair as a site of resistance and oppression all in one. The two films studied, *Pelo malo* (2013) by Venezuelan Mariana Rondón and *La Playa D.C.* by Colombian Juan Andrés Arango García expose

how the young Black male body must negotiate a system that has explicitly labeled them a threat. In *Pelo malo* the viewers follow Junior, a young boy with curly hair, as he tries to straighten his hair over the course of a summer in order to emulate whitened beauty standards in Venezuela to his ultimate failure. *La Playa D.C.* follows Tomás, a slightly older teenage boy, and his journey from adolescence into manhood through the use of hair in a Black community of Bogotá. Although both films focus on hair and body, they show two desperately different results that together form the dual reality of minoritized subjects in the West. Junior is constantly seeking the approval of his mother and the society at-large and attempts to straighten his hair on multiple occasions. His actions are read as acts of homosexuality by his mother and grandmother though his intention is clearly racial. Junior understands that in order to be loved he needs to perform the proper racial role and that is to whiten his hair while in turn he is read as "not correct" by the society. Junior is in what Susan Bordo calls a "masculine double bind," describing when men try to move away from socially imposed expectations and are read as less than the expectations creating two problems at once. For Junior, his bind is both racial and gendered in a way that he ultimately cannot and does not escape.

While Junior fails in his efforts, Tomás succeeds in maneuvering around his economically depressed Colombian setting in order to use hair and his African roots as a source of pride in order to become a man of his own making. Like Junior, Tomás faces several hurdles throughout the film that expose a racist reality in Latin American culture, but he is ultimately triumphant in negotiating these expectations to his own benefit. His hair—usually a source of tension for many Latin American people—becomes the precise site of his success in both securing a profession and finding a peace with his Black reality

that propels him to eventually become a barber in his own right. Both young boys must combat societal expectations that repeatedly tells them they are less and should not be in the places they try to inhabit. In the end, the films together show two sides of the same kaleidoscope and how the images can change dramatically. Each boy serves as the glass within the kaleidoscope metaphor that exposes how the reality for Black subjects is one that is at once precarious and triumphant. Each boy has societal expectations imposed on them, but they manage to have diametrically different outcomes. Junior is eventually silenced in a such a way that makes one question the future of mixed-raced people, whereas Tomás navigates it to a hopeful future. Together the films show the reality of this experience in that they are neither wholly successful nor completely fatalistic underscoring how the kaleidoscopic unsaid emerges through the Black male body and hair. Allthough the contexts change they use the unsaid of their bodies to negotiate the world around them.

The Kaleidoscopic Unsaid

Therefore, the kaleidoscopic unsaid serves to provide an opening for subaltern subjects that looks beyond the singular ideas of subjectivity emphasized by Western epistemes and negotiates within a system that sets out to oppress them. I have explained how the power structure in the West privileges those from European countries. This Eurocentric view created the colonial reality of the past that has led to a coloniality in the present. This power system goes beyond political administrative structures and also into academic, racial, national, and gendered constructions of people. The kaleidoscope serves as the global structure that shifts into its local realities with its changing and myriad of subjectivities. What we see in Juan Francisco Manzano, the characters in Díaz and

Danticat's novels, and Junior and Tomás are Afro-diasporic people who resist and re-inscribe the oppressive system because there is no other way to survive. But within that inscription they show glimmers of agency; they are not passive subjects in the world waiting for others to tell them how to be or behave but rather people who show a sense of self and smarts to survive that emerges through the unsaid. Through the various unsaids that are used by these subjects which change, shift, and morph, this project ultimately adds to the ontological representations in the West that in itself decolonizes, albeit in small ways, the structure where these subjects reside. This dissertation adds to the humanistic studies the perpetually shifting subjectivity that defines subaltern subjects throughout time allowing them to choose how they are articulated on their own terms. This act of self-representation acts as force that slowly resists passive enunciations that are only guided by Eurocentric hegemonic norms but also recognizes that these norms are virtually inescapable.

This dissertation is not intended to solve the problems faced by the people these subjects represent but rather form a new and encompassing articulation of the reality of many minoritized subjects in the Atlantic world. The goal is not to complete nor essentialize their reality but to *add* to the discourse already in place that attempts to decolonize global structure in how we engage with those who for too long have been silenced by the power structures. The kaleidoscopic unsaid of this project provides for a continuation in discussion that stems from various theoretical fronts and tries to condense a perpetuity that is difficult to pin down, but important to attempt in order to provide additional methods for which to examine the world. By reading this project through the interconnected struggle, the kaleidoscopic unsaid underscores the fixity that oppresses

and fluidity the Black bodies espouse in their experiences. It is within the contradictions that some find where these subjects are able to exert an articulation that disrupts and adds to humanistic scholarship.

Chapter I

Self-Articulation Echo in Juan Francisco Manzano's *Autobiografía de un esclavo* (1836)

> For turning Absence into Presence is not the same as turning waged workers into free workers. The latter reorganizes the world; the former brings it to an end.
>
> —Frank B. Wilderson, III

Explaining a 1992 demonstration in South Africa where black Marxists were rallying their comrades into protesting the apartheid regime, Frank B. Wilderson describes how the crowds erupted into cheers when they heard the regime would kill them if they went ahead with the protests. Wilderson writes:

> I am not saying that we welcomed the prophesy of our collective death. I am arguing that the threat of our collective death, a threat in response to the gesture of our collective— our "living"— will, made us feel as though we were alive, as though we possessed what in fact we could not possess, human life, as opposed to Black life (which is always already "substitutively dead," "a fatal way of being alive")— we could die because we lived. (97)

By threatening to kill these protesters, the majority of whom were black, the South African regime gave them a major victory: acknowledging their presence. The dire scenario faced by these black South Africans and as the epigraph notes, this striving to be present, changes the social, global, economic, and epistemic structure in a such a way that tensions emerge and systems change. Juan Francisco Manzano's black life is "substitutively dead" forcing his writing to declare that he lived thus making writing the source of this break. Disrupting the hierarchies of white power has ramifications for all people of color both on the African continent and in the diaspora. The struggle for

presence is one that is seen by all black subjects around the world comprising of abolitionist movements in the 19th century, the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s in the US, and the toppling of apartheid in South Africa, which mark different points in global history where black people have been inserting their voice as human beings rather than as only marginalized subjects.

But for these bodies to be recognized as "human life" they must find a voice within a world system that refuses to hear them and with the aftermath of an erasure of culture that has silenced them. Thus, narratives of enslaved people have been a fundamental part of representations in African diasporic literature since the 18th century and an instrumental part in recognizing both an ontological and epistemological erasure of black subjects and their subjectivity. Yet the role people of the African diaspora play in the canon and in academic discourse surrounding this genre has changed significantly over time. Initially used by abolitionists across North America and Europe, these narratives gave slaves and former slaves a platform to show the world the realities of their conditions. Writers like Frederick Douglass and Olaudah Equiano have been inserting themselves into the consciousness of the world in a way that disrupts the negation of blackness of their day, the remnants of this nonexistence can still be found today. Speaking of Olaudah Equiano's autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano* written in 1789, Lisa Lowe notes that the idea of an autobiography in 18th century was to show the emergence of knowledge in a liberal tradition (44). She points to other famous autobiographies of the time and shows how the discourse is based on a the liberal idea of enlightenment along with a bildungsroman style of plot in Equiano's text. Lowe implores critics to not read autobiographies merely within the genre

but also for what they show about the transatlantic slave trade— a task I attempt to do in this chapter. By looking at Juan Francisco Manzano's text through different parameters at once, we see how his insertion into presence is complicated, espousing the many twists and turns Manzano took to come into presence.

No other Hispanic former enslaved person has received more critical attention than Cuba's Juan Francisco Manzano and his *Autobiografía de un esclavo* (1835, 1839) where he details his life as a house slave in 19th-century Cuba[8]. As part of the broader antislavery narrative genre, Manzano's text differs from many of the texts studied in the canon in that it was originally written by a Black subject. Similar to other texts of the genre that deal with abolitionist causes, Manzano's text showcases the life of an exceptional slave. However, unlike many of the novels that are labeled as anti-slavery narrative the reader does not see a stereotypical love story, as in the case of Gertrudes Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841), or an enslaved person that would be sympathetic to a white audience as in the case of Anselmo Romero y Suarez's *Francisco el ingenio o las delicias del campo* (1839), or a focus on the class struggle within colonial Cuba, as in the case of Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés* (1882). With the exception of *Sofía* (1891) written after slavery and by Afro-Cuban politician Martín Morua Delgado, most antislavery narratives were written by white abolitionists and intellectuals with an immediate purpose in mind: to bring an end to slavery and the slave trade" (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 4). While many of these depictions show a docile and submissive enslaved

[8] It is important to note the different titles that the work has been published under. Originally published in English by Richard Madden as *The Story of Slave Written By Himself and Other Poems* in 1839, the text was renamed in the 1960's as *Autobiografía de un esclavo* after the publication of the Miguel Barnet's 1963 *Biografiía de un cimarrón* which received extensive critical attention the Latin American and North American academy, ushering in what many scholars believe to be the first *novela testimonio*. The research does not indicate whether or not Manzano had a name for his work.

person (Schulman, “The Portrait of a Slave” 361-2), Manzano’s texts reveals a dynamic individual not pegged solely to the power structure within representation but slowly resists through his narration, underscoring how his text disrupts the power discourse through sound.

This chapter will examine how voice is constructed within the power confines that places Manzano's editors perpetually above him and his writing. By engaging with scholars Adriana Cavarero and Mladen Dolar’s theorizations on the voice, I show how voice is constructed in such a way that it must have several actors in order to be enunciated. For a black writer, and one from the Caribbean, this polyvocal reality is not one that diminishes his writing but that enhances Manzano’s narrative, breaking hegemonic (academic) expectations of how a black writer can and should enunciate the self. While these singular academic expectations diminish his work, looking at the multiplicity in voice by acknowledging the mutilations as part and parcel of the whole work, this chapter begins to show a complicated text that pushes against academic standards on minoritized subjects. The mutilations that occur to his writing do not change the nature of his existence but reinforce the toxic and oppressive imposition of standards. The changes and edits made to his narrative do not put into question the authenticity of the text but further highlight the reality of being both a black subject and a writer. This reality does not end with the cementation of an Afro-diasporic literary tradition of the 20th century but marks a continuation of this existence. While the contributions of Sylvia Molloy and Ian Schulman have been instrumental in elevating Manzano’s work, this chapter proposes the need to re-evaluate his *Autobiografía* in a way that contemplates his Caribbean and Afro-descendant reality that is often omitted in the examination of his text

that permeates through Manzano's narrative.[9] Thus, the echo becomes an instrument to show how for subaltern subjects their writings needs to be read in context and in relation rather than imposing outside and incoherent expectations on their writings. While the kaleidoscopic unsaid emerges in the second chapter through the various articulations of trauma in the Dominican and Haitian context and the third chapter through navigations of body and hair; for this chapter it emerges in the various ways Manzano speaks through an imposed silence, a selected silence, and an aesthetic silence that is linked to external forces beyond his control. Using John Mowitt's concept of the "echo" this chapter reads Manzano's text with, instead of despite, its totality. Similar to the power relations inherent in the formation of canon which constantly battle who and what is read (Mignolo 21), shifting the discourse on *how* the narrative is read further destabilizes canon as to create presence for Manzano.[10]

Manzano's narrative straddles a realm between fiction, testimonial, and autobiography that parallels other testimonio texts, but is oftentimes intellectually redused for having the heavy-handed editing of del Monte, Suárez y Romero, and Madden. These criticisms miss the key elements the text explores such as his self-reflection, descriptive language, and nonlinear accounting that proves Manzano incorporated a poetic style to elevate his text from a historical accounting to a piece of art—or, put more directly, having Manzano move from mere existence to *presence* as to

[9] It is not lost on me that this chapter also stems from a certain place of academic privilege, however, this is where the echo allows for an opening to discuss the work of Manzano as both mutilated, an existential enunciation, and an artistic work breaks down the one-dimensional nature associated with this text.
[10] In his article titled "Canons A(nd) Cross-Cultural Boundaries (Or, Who's Canon are We Talking About?" (1991) Walter Mignolo discusses how definitions of the canon are based on power relations that reflect society writ large. While he does not discuss the power relations in critiquing authors of color, I find his article to reflect the same academic privilege that oppresses Manzano is the same source that defines what is and is not the canon. With this in mind this chapter aims to destabilize academic discourse similar to post-colonial thinkers of the past and present.

allow for his humanity to be acknowledged. By shifting the criticism closer to the literary/cultural analysis than simply examining the texts for purposes of authenticity, this chapter begins to expose the artistic justice Manzano exerts—ultimately elevating his work with a more balanced analysis. By examining his narrative beyond the either/or notion of authenticity, originality, and provenance this project aims to break up the singularity associated with writing and highlight the multiplicity inherent in subaltern subjects. The kaleidoscopic unsaid provides this chapter with the perpetual shifting existence that this former enslaved person endures in order to enter into presence constantly combatting and re-inscribing the power structures. To this end, this chapter will instead explore the role of voice through the echo elevating the artistic quality of the text through analysis to provide an academic justice of sorts to Manzano's work that is often negated.

The Criticism

Manzano's text is the only recognized enslaved persons' narrative in Hispanic America providing a unique and poignant insight into the life of an enslaved person (Molloy 394, Schulman, "The Portrait of the Slave,"356). Originally written by Manzano in 1836 at the request of Domingo del Monte, a Venezuelan-born Cuban abolitionist and scholar, subsequently edited by Cuban writer Anselmo Suarez y Romero for grammar and style, and forwarded to English abolitionist and medical doctor Richard Madden who translates the text and publishes it with other poems by Manzano under the title "Early Life of a Negro Poet Written By Himself" with the aim of providing "complete accounting of slavery in Cuba." With these different mediators, Sylvia Molloy notes that the narrative is "an inordinately manipulated text— a slave narrative that, besides having

dispossession for its subject, was, in its very composition and publication, dispossessed" (396). This text is usually analyzed as a historical document, applying a standard that for most writers of color is based on white aesthetics. The focus on form, parallels with other enslaved perons' narratives, and critiquing Manzano and his poetry as being a "safe" style serves to further mutilate and demean his text. These criticism's mirror Eduard Glissant's assertion that Caribbean writers are pegged to a standard that is based on European understanding of Afro-diasporic works and then used these same European standards to explain the subaltern reality.[11]

This North American academic imposition as a gauge of "authenticity" on a subject that was never granted this agency, sets Manzano up for failure in a way that persist the systems of oppression. The types of questioning North American academics have been imposing on this writing deal with two key problems: first, this idea that Manzano, a black writer, could not write, and second, the problems of North American ideas of race and black aesthetics on Latin American cultural productions. As Richard Jackson notes, an Afro-Latin American literary genre emerges in the late 1960's and 1970's through global political awakening for black subjects that sought to rediscover their cultural roots. In Latin America this literary genre exploded especially by Latin Americanist who sought to expose the African traditions across the region. However, with this push several disconnects emerged, such as a focus on the African continent for aesthetics, a privileging of North American black expectations, and imposing definitions of what exactly can be an "Afro-Latin American" cultural productions.[12] Manzano's text

[11] See "Cross-Cultural Poetics" pp. 106-107.
[12] For more on this see Richard Jacksons "The Emergence of Afro-Latin American Literature" (2002) and "Literary Blackness and Literary Americanism: Towards an Afro Model for Latin America (1982).

suffers not just from the edits of the abolitionist that commissioned his work but also from the academic expectations that define subaltern subjects by placing them in categories that do not always reflect their subjectivity. John Beverley notes in "Hybrid or Binary?" that, "Hegemonic anticolonial or anti-imperialist discourse stabilizes the category of the pepe around a certain narrative (of common interests, community, tasks, historical destiny) that its class or group components may or may not share to the same degree or at all" (94). Manzano's subjectivity is linked to the broader group of African diaspora which he clearly is, but this definition is based on largely North American standards of what it means to be black rather than looking at Latin American standards of *mestizaje*, blackness, and personhood. Manzano, an enslaved person in the 19th century, has very little in common with the Afro-Latin American writers and movements of the late 1960's and 1970's imposing a 20th century standard on a subject that did not have that privilege, thus encapsulating him and his writing into a subjectivity not of his own choosing and unfair critiques not of his context. Acknowledging the complexity of Manzano's subjectivity, his time, and his experiences (both during his life and the legacy from his text) removes the expectations that continue to mutilate his work. Few academics have gone beyond examining Manzano for his literary capabilities without also condescendingly reducing his work as mere imitation. Rex Hauser, Sonía Labrador-Rodriguez, and Edward Mullen are just a few of the scholars that both critique the academic discourse around Manzano while at the same time elevating his discourse. Hauser does an extensive analysis of Manzano's poetry, Labrador-Rodriguez examines his *Autobiografía* as an intellectual statement, while Mullen comments on critic's inability to go beyond the historical context of his work. I follow the scholastic pursuits

of these scholars by engaging with Manzano's text as an artistic work rather than simply a historical text. By discussing his work in its totality, through all its mutilations and literary value, we begin to deconstruct the binary one-dimensionally stagnant academic discourse that has led to the continued atrocity on Manzano and his writing.

We see this lack of nuanced in critiques, for instance, in how many scholars have suggested that his writing is simply a mimicry of romantic writing conventions of the time or that his errors and unconventional structure makes his work less thus imposing a North American perspective. Not only is Manzano being oppressed while he lived as both an enslaved person and as a colonial subject, but the scholarship around his work now suffers from the neocolonial global reality in its current academic existence. Black bodies during Manzano's time were purposely denied presence in such a way that their existence at an ontological, epistemological, and physical level needed to find an outlet for presence which in this case was his art.[13] No doubt, his art and emergence into presence was nevertheless also negated through the encouragement of Del Monte, the Madden's translation, and Romero y Suárez's edits. These layers upon layers of failed expectations, artistic mutilations, and continued oppressions, point to a reality that minoritized subjects see today: they simply cannot win.

Moreover, contemporary scholars such as Ivan Schulman and William Luis, have done extensive research on the different variations of this text and explore the various

[13] While scholars have studied the dynamics of slave societies, I want to be careful not assume that enslaved people were simply passive actors during slavery. William Van Norman in *Shade-Grown Slavery: The Lives of Slaves on Coffee Plantations in Cuba* (2013) explains how slave rebellions showed agency by African enslaved people while also serving as an outlet for their frustrations in a system that controlled their bodies and ways of life. Van Norman also explains how the slave structure created systematically limited enslaved African people's ability to work outside of the plantation structure. With these points I want to highlight how the system impeded and rejected black bodies under slavery, yet, like Manzano, enslaved people rebelled through various means in order to obtain better living conditions. These resistances show how black bodies were not passive, but rather active actors within the system.

political interests that led to the commissioning of the narrative. Justifying these continued changes to the text in contemporary times Ivan Schulman states, "Though there are some who would object to modifications because they distort the original, whose defects are the mark of slavery, the modern reader of either Spanish or English would find the original text or its direct translation a chore to read" (Schulman , “Introduction,” 28). Schulman's arrogance in deciding what a reader would want to see rather than allowing the text to exist in its own right continues the hierarchies of power that oppressed Manzano as a writer and imposes an privileged perspective that Beverley cautions of when engaging with works by subaltern subjects ("The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio"). William Luis, who does a comparative study of Manzano’s text and the intended changes by the various mediators, ultimately falls in the same trap Schulman imposes on Manzano, mutilating the text by raising the voices of various other academics rather than looking at Manzano's work solely. Molloy examines Manzano's *Autobiografía* and his poems and condescendingly comments,

> The lyric 'I' of Manzano's poetry is a relative comfortable rhetorical construct, one into which Manzano seems to fit without effort. His models, stored either in his memory or in stray bits of print, are easy to call up and reassuring in their authority, they are, after all, the models of the master. (416)

Although Molloy speaks of the changes as a continuation of the physical atrocities that Manzano the person experienced, and no doubt intellectually it does, these analyses are a bit fatalistic and perpetuate the same imposed victimization that ultimately leads to further abuses.

Moreover, noting it was common for both educated (white) Cubans to have non-standard Spanish in their work, Edward Mullen comments, "If Manzano had not been a slave, such extensive commentary about his nonstandard Spanish would, I believe, seem quite unnecessary" (78-9). These unnecessary critiques are trying to redeem Manzano for not following a standard they (North American academics) have imposed on a man that could never achieve these expectations. There is an assumption in these analyses that Manzano was simply a passive actor that had no real ability to dictate what was going into the narrative.[14] Yet, they fail to acknowledge the impossibility of his *action* at the time. Unlike most other slave narratives of the time that were written by privileged whites, Manzano, in his run-on sentences, and unconventional grammar writes *his* experience which continues on through the edits and devaluing that occurred after his death.[15] His action gives presence to both himself and other enslaved people. There is no doubt that Manzano is what Nathaniel Garner calls an "exceptional subaltern" in that he does not represent the prototypical member of the society he represents, however, Manzano does not intend to be that. By focusing so much scholastic endeavors on the historical viability of the *Autobiografía*, and relegating his artistic attributes, this same privileged gaze on a text which ends up further mutilating the narrative— continuing the atrocities into its academic discourse. This project also concludes, like Beverley and Molloy have stated, that Manzano's text is heavily mutilated. However, unlike many of

[14] James Olney comments that the usage of memory in order to create an accounting and narration of their life, "the autobiographer is not a neutral and passive recorder but rather a creative and active sharper" (47)
[15] In *Slave Testimony* (1977), Blassingmane discusses how most enslaved persons narratives from 19th century antebellum America were dictated by enslaved peoples and written by white abolitionists where they then would make factual, stylistic, and grammar changes to the story to fit the political/abolitionist means. Ultimately, making the narrative as much the editors as the enslaved person (vi-xxix)

the scholars before me, this chapter examines Manzano's *Autobiografía* both with the mutilations and the literary value in order to encompass its (and his) totality.

Manzano's exceptionality is apparent from the beginning of the text when he gives an early accounting of the people that owned him and how he was his mistresses "niño de su vejez" (84) proclaiming that he was the favorite and that there are still "witnesses" of this occurrence. This experience seemingly gives Manzano an advantage in a world where he was completely negated as a human. It is here where he discusses the fact that he was sent to school, but what exactly he learns is not precisely stated and alludes to his eventual ability to learn how to read, write and produce his narrative. One can suspect that Manzano is aware of his audience and needs to give a credible reason, in their eyes, for how this work was created. He states that he was taken to the French opera, went to sermons where he knows about catechism, how much you can show a woman about religion and slew of other knowledge that presumably were limited to other enslaved persons but Manzano was granted. Having an occupation during his servitude becomes a preoccupation and Manzano notes that at 10 years old he did not yet have one, but his Señora eventually settles on him being a tailor. This profession has little mention throughout the narrative except with minor references to this job.

Yet, Manzano's exceptionality is intermixed with factual errors and inconstancies that many scholars have discussed at length. Ivan Schulman, William Luis, and Sylvia Molloy have pointed out the factual differences of the original 1835 version, the 1840 English translation, and the 1937 Spanish publication, which consists of grammatical changes, content manipulations, and stylistic erasures, Manzano in the end manages to insert his experience through subtle yet poignant ways. His narrative departs from the

traditional Anglophone enslaved person narrative in that he does not merely give an accounting of his life from birth to freedom. With the exception of a few standout works like American Fredericks Douglas or British Oloudah Equiano, the enslaved person's narrative usually fits in a standard mold with little variation. James Olney notes the enslaved person's narratives has been relegated to a second-class status because:

> the slave narrative is most often a non-memorial description fitted to a preformed mold, a mold with regular depressions here and equally prominence there - virtually obligatory scenes, turns of phrase, observances, and authentications - that carry over from narrative to narrative and give to them as a group the species that we designated by phrase "the slave narrative. (49)

Like many enslaved person's narrative, however, Manzano exerts the main goal which was to declare "I exist." But for Manzano it was not just existing as person, but also existing as writer, both elevating his text from a mere accounting of the atrocities of slavery and asserting a subjectivity and artistic identity not seen in the written form by a Black writer in Hispanic America.

Scholars lack an understanding of the context in which Manzano is writing and existential aftermath of slavery on black subjects. Jonhn Mowitt's framework of the "echo" helps explain this disconnect and the relational nature that Manzano's *Autobiografía* has with writing and the critiques that are made on his writing.[16] In his book *Sound: the Ambient Humanities* (2015), John Mowitt attempts to deconstructs how Western epistemes are tied to sight and explores the sound/sense binary that exists in in

[16] Gayatri Spivak has a similar reflection in her essay "Echo" (1993) where she critiques "On Narcissim: An Introduction" by Freud. In her essay she criticizes Freud's representation of Echo due to the power relation that have deemed her both feminine and post-colonial trying to speak in a world that has been created to keep her silent.

various ways of knowing. The main concern with *Sound* is whether sound is the sort of object that can be meaningfully contextualized and, if so, "how the work of its contextualization must be carried out" (2).[17] Mowitt's work focuses on deconstructing an academic dialectical basis rather than looking at the practical application of his theorization. Mowitt explores the semantics of a few choice words that are analogous to his exploration of sounds, using the *gaze* as it relates to sound studies in his search for deeper, more meaningful questions, and subsequent understandings of events and texts. For Mowitt, the "echo" is a way to understand how a text represents itself to an audience with the use of different structures (21-3). Mowitt argues that because of the echoes inherent delay, its "mirroring" becomes imperfect and the lag shifts the authority of the source of the echo. Thus, "In effect, echo, while not giving up on its source, refuses to enshrine a simple principle of derivation at its core, thereby obliging literary or cultural sociologists of all stripes to respond to the theoretical gauntlet it throws down" (27). This delay or shift of the echo links the source to the power structures, or authority, while at the same time pushing against the authority that produced the sound. In the case of Manzano, his work is clearly linked to the sociocultural reality of his day and after— whether it is through the similarity in style of romantic poets or through the mistakes he makes in writing due to his auto-didactic experience with writing— and the limits that these scholars place on his work are theirs and not his. These limits are reflective of a

[17] The listening/hearing binary could be deployed as well, though Mowitt settles on *audit*, due to it bearing "the semantic profile that allows us to recognize its presence in audition, auditorium, and audience. It is a "hearing" (4). Here Mowitt sets up the tension between the gaze and the audit. Moreover, Mowitt states that "Pulling these threads together, one arrives not so much at a perception of sensible event but at a fold where perception turns back or over on itself, traversing the faculty of hearing with the angle, the posture of listening. It is here that the audit serves as a coherent analogue to the gaze" (4). Mowitt is not trying to disqualify the gaze and makes it clear that the way humans produce knowledge through sight is a valid source of information, but he wants to *add* the audit in order to provide a fuller way of knowing that does not simply rely on one sense.

broader power dynamic that subaltern subjects must face in a world that has been created to actively oppress them. Thinking of Manzano's articulation of the self as an echo deconstructs the problems of authorship and voice present in text rather than dismissing and limiting his narration in singular terms. By looking at the connection of body and voice, the depth of discourse, and his agency throughout the text we can see how his articulation of the self emerges through the echo of his surroundings, complicating the unidirectional mode scholars tend to examine his work by rethinking the power relations associated with this narrative.

For the *Autobiografía* power relations reflect what many black writers in the Caribbean and the diaspora suffer from: "a forced poetics." According to Eduard Glissant, as opposed to a "natural poetics" where there is no disconnection between the desire to express and the community that surrounds the subject, a forced poetics emerges, "where a need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression" (120). Glissant explains that Caribbean writers find a way to create a counter poetics because of a deficiency in the forms of expression which is caused by their history as enslaved people where self-expression itself is so thwarted that it leaves these subjects almost impotent (122). Therefore, the body and the expression have always been linked to each other in a way that was not the case for the written form. Body and voice are linked in such a way for Afro-diasporic subjects that pushes back against the atrocities of slavery that must find expression in order to allow for the survival of a general Caribbean enunciation. Glissant states:

> To move from the oral to the written is to immobilize the body, to take control (to possess it). The creature deprived of his body cannot attain the immobility where

writing takes shape. He keeps moving; it can only scream. In this silent world, voice and body pursue desperately an impossible fulfillment. (123)

Although he does point to the problematics of the written form being taken up by societies that have traditionally been oral, he makes the case that it is needed in order to push back against colonial powers specifically through Creole. The written word, as opposed to the spoken word, takes on a significant purpose for black writers because the spoken word is temporal, as Derrida notes.[18] This temporality, when your existence is already fleeting and precarious, turns into an urgent need for Manzano, extensively elaborating on his writing process and his emotional state rather than only anecdotal quotidian events.

In the *Autobiografía,* body and violence become prominent themes throughout the text highlighting the abysmal existence on the enslaved person's body but also the need to express his existence. Although his experience is not common of most enslaved people in that he was given special treatment by his master and he taught himself how to write, Manzano provides a small window into the lived violent experience of all enslaved people, a point that is not unique to him but typical of enslaved person's writings of the time. Manzano discusses the precarious nature in which he lived because of his Señora's fleeting moods who would beat him violently without him knowing the cause for her abuse. He says that for the most menial reasons he would be locked up for days at a time where his Señora was violent to him. He explains that on a whim, and for reasons he never fully understands, was not given water and food stating "lo qué sufría aquejado del hambre y la sed; atormentado del miedo" (87). In another instance Manzano is accused of

[18] See Jacques Derrida's "The Voice That Keeps Silence" (1973)

stealing a chicken he was supposed to deliver and when he was asked to account for the missing item he is tied up and dragged on the streets stating:

> Nos habíamos alejado como un cuarto de legua, cuando fatigado de corre del caballo di un traspié y caí: apenas di en tierra, dos perros o dos fieras que nos seguíanse me tiraron encoma; el uno metiendose casi toda mi quijada en su boca, me atravesó los colmillos hasta las muelas, y el otro me agujereó el muslo y pantrorrilla izquierda, todo con la mayor voracidad y protitud cuyas cicatrices se conservan aun a pesar de los 24 años que has pasado sobre ellas" (96).

After this torture they continue to question Manzano for the lost chicken and he finally confesses even when he knows he was not the one to have stolen the product. Whether it's the comments on his hunger and thirst, the brutality he suffered because of a false accusation or the other less severe beatings and tortures he endured, the legacy on his body has led to the scream Glissant comments on. His body in the text becomes the site of these atrocities attempting to make a sound for the lost cries of the past.

While a lot of the violence in the text points to the broader bodily harm done to him, the narrative also jumps between moments of happiness and an elevation of the violence through his own psychological analyses. For instance, he juxtaposes the Señora D. Joaquina's kind treatment where he says she would treat him like "un niño blanco, me vestia, peinaba y cuidaba de que no me rozase con los otros negritos" (87). He does not just elucidate what abolitionists wanted to see or what Del Monte wanted him to write, the violence that would lead to the end of slavery, but also the lighter moments where he develops as a person. In another moment of joy, he describes living in La Habana in a confined state of freedom where "me bañaba cuatro veces al día hasta la noche, corría a

caballo, pescaba, registré todos los montes, subí todas las lomas, comí cuantas frutas había en las arboledas, en fin, disfuté de todos los inocentes goces de la juventud" (91). With these moments of joy and pure fun the reader can see a more complex figure, one that breaks away from the expectations of subjugation of the day and the single-sided depictions of today. Time and again Manzano weaves these positive memories with moments of violence that breaks the one-dimensional expectations on him, showing a man with a multifaceted nature. However, moments like the one described above are short lived and do not negate his abysmal existence. In a 2007 introduction to the text, William Luis suggests that some of the changes were made by Madden in the translation and Romero and Suarez to create an urgency to the cause of abolition, however, this does not negate the fact that Manzano inserted more than simply his accounting. He chooses to show the world his life and his existence because his writing displays an urgency to be heard. To question why exactly Manzano incorporates these elements in the text, we will never know, but the effect it has on the text is that it humanizes a character, reflective of a person, that would have otherwise been relegated to an object. This narrative reveals how Manzano led a full life, albeit one marked by violence and melancholia, and captures this narrative for himself.

Like the moments of joy that sets the narrative apart, the text also elevates the analysis of his surroundings through poetic description. Manzano describes his experience in this cell in metaphoric and poetic language that shows both his artistic abilities and mental capacity—shifting the black subject from object to person. Describing being punished for not going to his master's arms after she sent for him, Manzano was kept outside in a locked room for days. He portrays the rats in the cell by

stating, “cuando salian un tropel de ratas asiendo ruido me paresia ver aquel sotano lleno de fantasmas y daba tantos gritos pidiendo boses misericordia entonces se me sacaba me atormentaban con tanto fuete hasta mas no poder y se me enserraba otra vez…” (88). Manzano’s description of the rats as “fantasmas” underscores the literary capabilities of the text and his ability to move beyond simply narrating an experience but capture that haunting that went along with his maltreatment. While Molloy notes that some of the hyperbolic rhetoric may have been at the urging of Del Monte in order to create a scenario where presumably white readers would feel more sympathetic to the abolitionist cause (395), the fact of the matter is readers simply do not know and Molloy’s assessment limits the black subject and fails to take into account the radical nature of his writing.

In addition to these poetic descriptions the text exposes how the physical violence leads him to fits of sadness and defining him through melancholia. He states that from the ages of 13 or 14 he started to become very melancholic a point he references throughout the text. His repeated mentioned of his emotional state constant lamentations of his reality, commenting on how "la melancolía estaba concerntrada en mi alma" (89). With this, Manzano does not simply state his sadness but rather shows the depth of the violence on his soul, moving away from anecdotal suggestions of his mental state to an existential problem that he cannot resolve. Melancholia and sadness become tropes throughout the text where Manzano shows the reader that the mental impact that being an enslaved person had on him. His personal observations and self-reflections become central to elevating the text. For instance, describing his treatment he states, “...con este y otros tratamientos algo peores mi carater se asia cada ves mas tasiturno y melancolico no

hallaba consuelo mas qe. Recostado en las piernas de mi madre…" (90). This violence is not exclusive to Manzano and is not the only cause for his depression but seeing his mother beaten after being asked to explain the actions of her son he states, "Este golpe lo sentí en el corazón" (93). He constantly misses his family and the times he is alone finds the melancholic moments arise in full force. Body and mind come together in the text to show a full depiction of a man being pulled in various directions but desiring to tell his story. The text manages to show a depth in person and psyche that moves against the political goals of the commissioners and weaves together a narrative that straddles various genres and missions at once. To accuse the text of simply being a pawn for interlocutors such as Del Monte and Madden limits the complexity the text espouses of a writer that needed to scream his experience.

The *testimonio*

The text's mixture of edits, its emergence from repression, and its articulation of a man reflect ethical and artistic quandaries of the Latin American *testimonio*. Since the 1970's, testimonio has been a genre within Latin American cultural and literary studies that is broad and difficult to concretely define. Although many scholars have examined the genealogy of testimonio and its transformation, I elaborate the concepts that point towards a definition, its application to Manzano, and how it is emblematic of the echo he ultimately produces. It is almost impossible to define this genre, because to do so limits its possibilities of de-territorialization, however providing for conceptual elaborations of the debate will provide a clearer understanding of Manzano's work. Like the echo, the testimonio is an in-between genre straddling multiple power and literary structures at once. The most concise, and often cited, definition is by John Beverley in his essay "The

Margin at the Center" (1989) where he defines testimonio as "a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or a significant life experience" (31). This definition involves, and often muddles, questions of authorship, community, voice, truth, fiction, and trauma, all very valid parts of this discussion and are also interrelated, like the echo. Beverley also enumerates different versions of what scholars also deem to be testimonio such as the autobiography, oral histories, and memoirs among other texts and notes that, "however, because testimonio is by nature a protean and demotic form not yet subject to legislation by normative literary establishment, any attempt to specify a generic definition for it, as I do here, is at best provisional, and at worst repressive." [19] Nevertheless, Beverley's caution has not stopped other scholars from attempting to define in concrete terms what this genre is, however, the various definitions do the same action which is the destabilize the power relations in the elite. To pin down Manzano's texts through analysis as simply an articulations of slavery or as a historical document, as most scholars do, is similarly repressive. By engaging with its multiplicity, we can begin to shift the power structures that have oppressed this text and the man behind to create new ways of understanding Manzano through his echo.

Manzano's narrative goes beyond simply being a historical accounting both stemming from his oppressive reality but his desire to be a writer becoming a material vestige of this man. René Jara, in the often cited *Testimonio y literatura* publications

[19] Beverley specifically lists the following: autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, novella-testimonio, nonfiction novel, or factographic literature" (31)

from the 1984 symposium on literature and testimonio, does not define testimonio but discusses what the genre points to, saying:

> Una definición del testimonio debería tal vez apuntar— además de los datos ya mencionados [el testimonio es una forma de resistencia y un proyecto futuro— hacia la peculiaridad de su origen. Es, casi siempre, una imagen narrativa que surge, de una atmósfera de represión, ansiedad y angustia, o en momentos de exaltación heroica, en los avatares de la organización guerrillera, en el peligro de la lucha armada. Más que una interpretación de la realidad esta imagen es, ella misma, una huella de lo real, de esa historia que, en cuanto tal, es inexpresable. La imagen inscrita en el testimonio es un vestigio material del sujeto" (2).

Manzano's text stems from an atmosphere of repression, whether intellectual or existential, his anxiety for his poetry and his existence, and his anguish that emerges from his striving to articulate his life and art. He echoes the writing style of those he admires because he sees them as emulating an existence he desires yet, adds something new that stems from that reality of oppression. His text becomes an echo of his existence, of his writing, of the world that surrounds him, lifting the veil off of the North American expectations of academic critics.

Yet, these "material vestiges of the subject" are not just of a singular subject but a collective and testimonio stems from a collective trauma even if the writing does not explicitly state it. Where in the famous debate about Rigoberta Menchú and her testimonial, the collective enunciation both reflects a cultural tradition and a traumatic event for her people. In the case of Manzano, he plays with the reader in order to articulate his existence and some scholars have noted the fact that he excludes other

enslaved peoples outside of his own family ultimately collectivizing a 'them' that Manzano does not belong (Branche 79). Manzano's main focus of his text was not abolitionism *per se*, but rather how to assert his artistic and literary capabilities. Nevertheless, his text took on a collective reality through Madden's publication in 1840 and through the academic discourse that emerges in the 1960's, becoming a representative of enslaved people even if it was not his intent. This is common of autobiographies more broadly where the author makes it a point to discuss their coming of age or whichever story they decide to narrate. Although autobiographies focus on the 'I' rather than the 'we', a distinction made by both Beverley and Molloy, Manzano's text was initially intended to portray the lived enslaved persons experience for an abolitionist audience.

However, this collectivized notion in the text does one thing: topple the hierarchies of power. It is unknown whether or not this was Manzano's intention, but nevertheless, his work and his art shift the place of a black man in colonial Cuba. Moreover, as George Yúdice explains how in testimonio there is toppling of the epistemic notions of representation within writing that emerges through the creation of consciousness. He writes:

> Si los códigos literarios y crítico -literario vigentes oscilan entre una estética representacional y una *écritue* auto deconstructiva, la concientización practicada por la pedagogía freirean y por la teología de la liberación proporciona otros modelos que no es exclusivamente epistemológico o ético sino ambos simultáneamente (223-24).

Yúdice goes on to say that this solidarity with others is fundamental for the transformation of the world where change comes with a creation of consciousness and

that praxis of writing takes priority over ideological representations of the world or a notion of reflection but that is not to say that the representation in the text does not reflect a certain ideology within the context in order to survive (224). Ultimately, what testimonio great feat has been is to enter the academic discourse and both represent people at the margins or the subaltern while at the same time breaks up ideas of literature. Thus, engaging with the critical discourse of testimonio allows to expand the possibility of Manzano's *Autobiografía* emphasizing both the its literary qualities, its subaltern status, and the historical significance at once rather than dissecting each individually. As George Gugelberger notes, "Thus testimonio becomes interesting not so much for what it says and how it says it (as literature *per se*), but rather for how it entered critical discourse and the institutional centers of higher learning, thereby dismantling our treasured notions of literature" (9). Manzano's text breaks up both commonly held notions of what literature should be for subaltern subjects and expands how black writers of the time could write. When scholars such as Molloy or Schulman focus on Manzano's historical components and denigrate his literary accomplishments they reproduce the mutilations, they claim to be moving against. By looking at the *Autobiografía* with its literary production, historical significance, and existential mutilations, the "echo" is produced where there is no singular source of genesis, purpose for existence, or ontological importance but rather multiple sources simultaneously. Therefore, by engaging with these different perspective at once through an echo the academics can better obtain an accounting of Manzano the artist, not just the enslaved person. Moreover, the multiplicitous echo of Manzano's work then underscores Beverley's definition of testimonio as:

> testimonio es y no es una form auténtica de cultura subalterna; es y no es "narrativa oral"; es y no es documental; es y no es literatura; concuerde o no concuerda con el humanismo ético que manejamos como nuestra ideología práctica académica; afirma y la vez deconstruye a la categoría de sujeto. (*Testimonio*, 10)

Per Beverley's explanation, testimonio straddles a line between two genres and purposes that make it difficult and at times contradictory to traditional held ideals within humanism. Manzano's text then is at once an accounting of his life while at the same it *is* literature. The genre itself straddles the line between "fact"-based historical storytelling and fictional creations that are difficult to resolve yet these scholars find it difficult to reconcile the two. By examining this text as being at once a historical work, an autobiographical accounting, and an insertion into presence the power structures are broken up as to find new possibilities for subaltern writing then and now.

The Voice and Presence

Testimonio, then, provides for Manzano's narrative an entryway into how to examine the voice he produces when he inserts his presence. Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1983), a foundational work within postcolonial studies, introduces the role of the "subaltern" in academic discourse putting into question who can speak for whom. In examining Manzano and his work, finding a voice is imperative to discuss how African diasporic subjects, specifically enslaved people and former enslaved people, articulate their existence in a world that has traditionally negated their presence. For Manzano, one can point to the heavily edited parts of the texts by the editors revealing how Spivak's assertion that the West speaks for the people it has formerly colonized to

be true. Spivak deconstructs the Western epistemologies of thinkers such as Guilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, and how their liberal ideologies fall short when speaking of subaltern subjects because, as European thinkers, they cannot understand them, representing their view of the subjects studied rather than actually providing a voice for them (70-1). This lack of representation stems from an obliteration of the epistemological traditions of those subjects that reinforce the power dynamics inherent to the global colonial structure.

Therefore, how a subject speaks, and who listens when they do so, come to the fore when analyzing the power dynamics within and surrounding Manzano's *Autobiografía*. The voice is something both intimate and collective in a way that speaking is only seen as a representation of their experience. In order for the soul to be recognized, the body from which the voice emerges must be seen as a subject and not an object. Enslaved people were objects and therefore denied representation of their soul through the use of voice. Speaking, then, for an enslaved person is not merely an exchange but an articulation of the self, connecting their body and their voice. By speaking and articulating their existence enslaved people and formerly enslaved disrupt Western epistemologies by creating the voice that is mediated through the power structures that surround and mutilate their bodies requiring a subjective acknowledgement that enslaved African people were purposefully denied. In Manzano's text we see the connection between the body and the voice in a way that provides for an intellectual depth and subjective complexity. His voice emerges through an echo and a silence, connected to Del Monte, to Madden, to Romero y Suarez and the critics that he could have never fathomed. Silenced by those who edited but also using silence to push against the power

structure and inserting his role as an active actor, albeit a mediated one, that is not "either/or" but rather an "and" adding to the complexity of his text. Connected to his surrounding silence in the narratives shifts with different iterations an aesthetic silence that adds to the drums of Caribbean literatures, an imposed silence that Manzano uses to assert his agency, and an imposed silence that underscores his reality. Together, these shifts underscore the shifting nature of the kaleidoscopic unsaid.

Silence is often thought of as the absence of sound which strips this aural notion of any meaning, yet silence is an integral part of sound breaking up Western notions of how sound can be defined. For Manzano, he breaks from the traditional enslaved person's narrative of relaying a chronological account of his experience and moves into an analytical depth that inserts himself into an intellectually equal footing to white people. By reading Manzano's text beyond the autobiographical and abolitionist context, we see a depth and thought in his text that breaks singularly held views of what an enslaved person could think in 19th-century Cuba and the Americas through his narrative thread. Throughout the text Manzano discusses obfuscates, hides, changes subjects, or simply does not provide a full detailing of the events in the text allowing him not to be defined by just the violence but also through narrative controls. On several occasions, Manzano either changes the subject, says he does not know, or explicitly states that he cannot divulge what is going on. For instance, speaking of a time when some older enslaved person wanted to see him he says he does not know what happen in the moment, or when he was accused of stealing by another slave owner who talks to his Señora he does not know what was said (101). Or when his Señora told him to go to the house of a mayoral "y le dijese qué sé yo que cosa" (95). Or when he explains that he does not know

the reason why they took so long in one of their trips to the port (100). Together these moments amount to, whether intentional or not, Manzano's control over the audience of what exactly they are reading. In the text, not knowing creates a certain aura of mystery leaving the reader guessing and creating a cloudy description which highlights for Manzano what the reader should know.

For Manzano, silence becomes a central articulation for his writings contesting how his text is read by those outside of his context. Similar to the echo where the source articulating is linked to meaning but not in a direct line, for Mowitt, in silence has meaning as well. Sounds are linked with meaning according to Mowitt, but silence is a sound before it has been connected, or bound, to meaning (114). Mowitt tries to break the notion that listening is simply a passive act, but rather one that is active being informed by silence. He makes it clear that it is not just a linear connection between the two sonic manifestations, yet silence can also emerge between sounds and their meanings create new understandings. In the *Autobiografía* silence emerges in these moments where he cannot state what he knows are compounded by moments where he purposely does not explain a scenario. For instance, talking about time he was severely injured and left him nearly dead because he was struck in the head by a rock, he discusses how his father tossed his one joy, a small box of paints, into the river. After explaining this incident to his reader stating, "Pero hablemos de cuando volví a con mis Señora a Matanzas" (91). Manzano takes control of the scenario not giving the reader further insight into how he felt or details surrounding the incident further using silence to assert his presence. Or another instance where he discusses a time his mother was being attacked, he ends the anecdote with "pasemos, pasemos en silencio el resto de esta escena dolorosa" (93).

Again, Manzano directs the reader to the direction of the narrative, not divulging the reason why his mother being struck is too painful or the circumstances surrounding why she was attacked. He alludes to but does not complete the violent anecdotes that define enslaved person's narratives of the day. In both occasions he takes back the story, almost realizing that he is sharing too much with his audience, that he does not want them to come in and see his soul just at this moment. These allusions to the violence rather than explicitly telling his reader about the violence is a way that Manzano captures his own agency by taking control of what he says (Casanova-Marengo 36). Manzano attempts to keep some "secret" for himself and away from his audience.

This echoes Doris Sommer's article "No Secrets" (1995)where she explores the ethical problematics of the Western gaze on Rigoberta Menchú's testimonial text *Soy Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983). Here, the interaction between being an indigenous writer and keeping secrets from Western readers proves to problematize academic theorizations of the text. Language, for Sommers, is where Menchú relays her experience while engaging with readers that she simultaneously keeps at a distance creating a multiplicity that expands, rather than constricts, the power of language. Sommer notes at the end the text that, "No ideological code is assumed to be sufficient or defensible for Rigoberta or Domitila; instead they inherit a plurality of codes that intersect and produce a flexible and fissured political subject" (157). Like Rigoberta, Manzano is a malleable and fractured subject and he writes through self-reflection of his treatment and its impact on his person. Rather than simply showing his whole experience, he keeps certain elements close for himself elevating the intellectual depths of the text. For Manzano, that means that the criticisms his literature has seen fails to see the

importance of the Other, in this case white literary elites, and how his writing, just like all writing, is linked to an external entity. Mowitt's "echo" becomes instrumental because it breaks the linearity of the source and problematizes the power relations of a text where Manzano is not merely mimicking writing or a passive actor but a work that is created in conjunction with his surrounding, even with its atrocities. The voice in this text then breaks commonly held beliefs of originality and authenticity and makes readers realize the interconnected web that pushes against the one-dimensionality of Western subjectivities. This constitutes an ontological sound through an aesthetic echo that paves the way for other writers in the future to be heard.[20]

Miguel Barnet also problematizes the notion of the editor and the speaker in the early 1960's, where he theorizes the connection between the testimonio and a novel in what he calls the "novela-testimonio." Barnet actively seeks to deconstruct the genre borders in his thinking in order to provide for a voice for marginalized subjects (Alonso 46). Much has been studied in relation between Barnet's *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1963) and Manzano's *Autobiografía* and comparisons between the two texts abound: from the enslaved person at the center, questions of authorship, and political motives just to name a few. In the preface to his 1963 text, Barnet makes it clear that part of the text is a fabrication of his own making rather than direct words from Montejo. Barnet explains:

> La idea era hacer mi propio libro, un relato etnográfico. Y así fue como se llamó: *Biografía de un cimarrón: un relato etnográfico.* Después lo califiqué de novela-

[20] Timothy J. Cox, James Olney, and William Luis all comment how the enslaved persons narratives ushered in a "black aesthetics' for the emergence of a black consciousness that emerges in the Caribbean and in other parts of the Americas. While Cox and Olney discuss enslaved persons narratives in the US context, Luis specifically makes the claim that the antislavery narrative, and Manzano's text specifically, marks the first Cuban literary genre that impacts subsequent literary movements on the island.

> testimonio para ser honesto conmigo mismo, con la metodología que había empleado y con la proyección del contenido. (180)

Barnet seems to struggle in the introduction to the book between writing fiction and portraying the life of an individual who he deems important within the history of Cuba. He says, “Sabemos que poner a hablar a un informante es, en cierta medida, hacer literatura. Pero no intentamos nosotros crear un documento literario, una novela” (7). Barnet certainly goes through great lengths to discuss how much care he took in representing some of the most thought-provoking parts of the text. For instance, when describing the creation of a scene in the text where Montejo asks an old woman about rumors he is hearing regarding abolition Barnet writes , “Traté de reflejar ese lenguaje, trate de llevar a las páginas la entonación de ese lenguaje, los altibajos, los matices del lenguaje de Esteban Montejo y, desde luego, puse mucho de mi cosecha. Pero yo sé que el alma de Esteban Montejo está en ese libro” (184). Barnet arbitrarily decides how Montejo’s soul is in the text without any actual knowledge of how the former enslaved person wanted to be articulated. Barnet’s work is more about contemporary political issues in Cuban rather than a story about Montejo ultimately being an attempt to write a text for the Cuban people in post-revolutionary Cuba. By linking the text to a contemporary political moment, Barnet creates the voice of an oppressed people so they can support the communist regime. Whether Barnet is trying to convince himself that the text is a true approximation of Montejo’s words or if Barnet is trying to convince his audience can be debated, but the in-between nature of testimonial literature, and especially, testimonial-novel cannot be refuted. Although much has been studied between the two text, the parallels are superficial and equating Barnet's work (a white man) with

Manzano's (a black man) further underscores the lack of understanding academics have when analyzing the texts. While one text was the fabrication of a white ethnologist, the other has vestiges, whole and in part, of the enslaved person shifting how to define a novela-testimonio. Even though for both texts questions of voice and authorship are central, to Manzano's text his voice is mutilated in the process— a true, singular voice in Manzano's text is not possible because his existence is one of mutilation. The mutilation, unfortunately, defines the author and his work even in death representing an echo of a man and his art to an abolitionist audience and academics in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Additionally, in his book *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), Mladen Dolar links the voice to the body through silence. Dolar makes the case that the body needs the Other for the voice to be heard and understood. He points to the various layers of the voices such as the voice of reason and the voice of the superego to show how all of these types of voices converge together on the voice of the soul. He states "only the voice which is completely silent can 'outcry' all other voices" (90). The voice then is not completely of the subject nor of the other but rather a liminal object that sits between the two beings and links their existence. On the one hand this breaks these notions of fixity for people of color and indicates the need for the Other in any type of articulation. In this sense silence adds to the existing notion that musicality and drums are two fixtures of Afro-Caribbean writers and proposes additional ways of articulation through the aural. Manzano's aesthetic "silence" adds to the existing discussion of sound and rhythm in Caribbean articulation by proving an aural manifestation that also has meaning since silence is sound before it has been linked to meaning. For Glissant, the drum is an instrument that speaks to African people and can be seen in the literature of these subjects. Sound then is

a tool to disrupt the homogenous cultural reality of the world and provide for a plethora of voices. Or as Glissant writes in “Cross-Cultural Poetics” from his work *Caribbean Discourse* (1981), “I am not far from believing that the written is the universalizing influence of Sameness, whereas the oral would be the organized manifestation of Diversity” (100). Rhythm and sound are then translated into the written form to speak to the alienation black subjects feel expressing a collective suffering in the Caribbean in a way that can be traced back to Africa and portrays a uniquely black way of enunciating. Sound and history fold together in a disruptive way but in the end, has no final solution and thus:

> Our quest for the dimension of time will therefore be neither harmonious nor linear. Its advance will be marked by a polyphony of dramatic shocks, at the level conscious as well as the unconscious, between incongruous phenomena or “episodes” so disparate that no link can be discerned. Majestic harmony does not prevail here, but (as long as for us the history to be discovered will not have encountered the past so far misunderstood) an anxious and chaotic quest. (Glissant 106-107)

This “anxious and chaotic quest” to speak their reality articulates the transatlantic and bodily suffering echoing the layers of trauma on the black subject. The beating of the drum might not be seen in Manzano's narrative, nor in his poems or play, but what we see is the reality that the writing of Manzano is a quest is to speak his reality, to showcase his writing, and to be present.

What Manzano lacks in an aesthetic sound he makes up by through the written echo, evaluating his own journey through writing. Sound does not define a being but

rather, as Italian scholar Adriana Cavarero says, a becoming (Cavarero 37). The silences and echoes seen in this text are a becoming, deconstructing Western ideas of knowledge, authorship, voice, and agency. In her book *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (2005) Cavarero explores how the link between voice and sound and its parallels with the individual and the community. She argues that voice is an external articulation of an internal being that all humans possess. However, the voice needs to be understood by people outside of the body which at this point it is given a significance and altered from its original articulation. She states "As long as the voice 'signs,' it stands for, and depends, on something else" (35). While Dolar connects the voice to the body, Cavarero connect the voice to the external reality that must also be acknowledged adding another layer to the echo in Manzano's text. Thus, the voice straddles this thin line between the individual and the community because without the community the voice is not recognized, but without the individual the internal sound of the human cannot be made, forcing the sound of the self and the listening of the Other to come together and produce a voice. Similar to Mowitt's notion of the echo, Cavarero links the notion of the voice to sound since the voice needs to be connected to an external signifier in order to be understood. For Manzano, the edits, critiques, the manipulations made by him and others link back to broader interconnected reality for a man that had no other choice. His sonic emission is muddled and not linear, victimized and triumphant, complicating the singularity of his voice in this text.

Writing itself becomes the sound produced by Manzano, allowing for him to assert his presence in the midst of his reality of non-existence. In his essay "Language to Infinity" Foucault discusses the genesis of modern-day notions of literature and how they

emerged in relation to language. For him, language is a representation of the oral form and writing provides fissures to emerge because it allows for it to push against death. Language allows for both what has been said in the past and what will be said in the future because it challenges death and escapes death (90). This allows language to open up and lead to infinity of possibilities and Foucault states, "the totality of language finds itself sterilized by the single and identical movement of two inseparable figures: the strict, inverted repetition of what has already been said and the simple naming of that which lies at the limit of what we *can* say" (96).[21] What can be said has endless possibilities not just for content but for form, as well, especially in a context where Manzano, and people like him, are not allowed to exist and much less write. What can be said in Manzano's text is that he exists.

Manzano exerts his existence through writing and the process of writing itself. His first experience with writing comes when he is about 12 years old where he tries to learn writing from a girl named Sefarina (87). After becoming ill with a cough, he was sent to the home of Sr. D. Francisco Luvián who took care of him while his health improved and was one of the first encounters with writing he obtained. His accounting is a bit vague with how exactly he was able to learn how to write taking from his memory, his ability and slowly expanding with the books from Luvián. He laments the fact that he did not have anywhere to apply this learning so he dedicated himself to learn how to write copying the words from his master and declaring that his letters are similar in form to his (104). He goes on to describe in great detail his process of learning letters and his daily dedication to the process. From here, his master would prohibit him from writing,

[21] My emphasis.

yet this is the first occurrence where he declares himself a writer albeit in the fashion of copying a Spanish neoclassical poet. Manzano writes, "Prohibiendose la escritura pero vano; porque todos se habían de acostar, y entonces encendía mi cabito de vela, y me desquitaba a mi gusto, copiando las más bonitas letrillas de Arriaza, a quien imitando siempre, me figuraba que con parecerme a él ya era poeta, o sabía hacer versos" (105). Paralleling his writing to another writer he admires allows Manzano to elevate his text and create a genealogy of his writing. He frequently discusses the way in which Arriaza influences his work in terms of the structure and the content. He also gives insight his views on writing stating, "La poesía quiere un objeto a que dedicarse: el amor regularmente nos inspira; pero yo era demasiado ignorante, y todavía no amaba: por lo tanto, mis versos eran frías imitaciones." (113) Here, again, is another point that he fashions himself a writer, analyzing his own ability and his early writing form. Together, these silences and influences are combined to show his written echo, not limiting but expanding the self in the writing. Manzano uses the other writers as springboards to insert his presence echoing their work but writing himself into existence.

Conclusion

To say, as the epigraph to this chapter notes, that absence to presence brings down a world order might not be what Manzano had in mind when accepted Del Monte's request for an autobiography. For a man who grew up as an enslaved person and wanted nothing more than to simply be a poet, he likely did not have changing the world order as a top priority. Regardless, his text has produced plenty of debate within the Latin American and North American academies that also could not have been imagined. The narrative, written for an audience with the hope it would further the end to the

abomination that is slavery reveals a writer that is tactical and poetic in his writing because that was his only means of protest. Like René Jara acknowledges, testimonio stems from an atmosphere of repression, anxiety and anguish, we see all of these elements in Manzano's text to produce a portrait of a man that is neither complete nor at peace. The text sits squarely in the realm of testimonio, straddling the complicated lines between fiction and relaying an accounting of trauma that millions of black subjects' experience. The debate around this text, which include many, whether it be that Manzano simply created a text that was edited for the use of others, that his literature is simply a replication of 19th century literary conventions, or that the text loses legitimacy because of the lapses in factual evidence, are all ways in which the same mutilation that Molloy speaks to are continued in the academic debate of this narrative. Through this work, and his play and poetry, Manzano manages to find a creative outlet that articulates his voice that he always had but was never heard because of who (or what) he was. These critics seem to forget that testimonio is also laced with fiction and focusing on the factual version of events and content ignores other components of the text that make it a portrait. Within this portrait, the kaleidoscopic unsaid emerges in this debate by stemming from the same power structures of repression that lead to the mutilation of Manzano in life and in death. The shifting nature of this text leads to the same power structure not allowing Manzano to win. Yet, not all is lost, and this author/narrator manages to eek out a voice that inserts him into presence.

The voice, as Caverero and Dolar show, is an iteration that is linked to another through sound. That without that other the voice, the sonic manifestations of the soul, cannot be articulated. For a writer of color this is a reality that must be overcome,

because for writers of color their presence to the other, as in the case of Manzano, is one that is fleeting at best, and non-existent at worst. This vocal enunciation for Manzano is done through writing, creating a certain forced poetics where he is met with a desire to write without any tradition of writing. But this writing is the release of his voice where he is able to declare "I exist" and "I am an artist" simultaneously as to challenge the world order unknowingly. Writing becomes a way for Manzano to make his mark on an artistic tradition while at the same time cementing an infinite existence without necessarily articulation those words explicitly, navigating a world through the unsaid that allows his voice to emerge.

Then, Manzano's text is an exploration of the person, his experience, his art, and insertion into presence seen for the first time in Hispanic America by a black man. Writing in a context where there was no defined black aesthetic, Manzano writes his art in such a way the shows his poetic style that develops a keen reflection of his own mental state from the physical and psychological abuse he experienced as an enslaved person. For his part, his observations, which one can point to his attempt at showing the social reality was also marked by subtle critiques of the people around him. Manzano also holds back, alluding to other atrocities that he simply cannot tell inserting his own agency and taking control of his work. Weaving memory, art, and experience in such a way that he ultimately leads to a self-reflection, both conscious of the impact to a white privileged audience, but also fulfilling his own desire that takes him beyond his condition and gives him presence.

Manzano articulates this existence through a text that was written not in a haphazard way, but carefully chooses what he tells his audience and how he tells it.

Manzano definitely appeases the likes of Del Monte and Madden by providing stories of his physical abuse, no doubt aware of what was expected of him. But he then elevates the genre from simply an accounting by adding a self-awareness and analysis of his mental state throughout the text. Yes, Manzano was an "exceptional" enslaved person, learning how to read and write and being treated to certain privileges not afforded to those similar to him. But the dismissal of his work as lacking a true representation for other black subjects of the time misses the important of his work for an artist. Manzano takes control of his work, providing critical analysis of people and himself and limits what he states by writing it explicitly or "forgetting" what exactly occurred in key moments of his life. As an authorial move, these moments of obfuscation are no accident and add to an intellectual depth of the text. Ultimately, the mutilations produced before, during, and after this text to Manzano encapsulated his existence that is not explicitly stated. In this *Autobiografía*, the kaleidoscopic unsaid is the reality these mutilations go beyond the physical and into the epistemic, enforced by the powers that be on the plantation, the colonial government, or in academia. Manzano shifts and moves within this structure to exert his presence in such a way that is not underscores the continuity of power relations but also the specificity of this one case. Manzano resisted, however, in a silenced manner and for that he will live into infinity.

While this chapter has focused on the academic debate around Manzano's narrative and his ability to maneuver through an unsaid iteration, the next chapter examines how the unsaid is a bodily one. For the characters in Díaz and Danticats text the generations of oppressions and mutilations are difficult to untangle from contemporary gendered, political, and classed subjugations that those subjects experience today.

Manzano shifted and moved his narrative like the lens of a kaleidoscope to exert his existence and thus this kaleidoscope lens shifts exposing how the black body negotiates the power structures in the novels that follow. For both contexts the power relations remain intact privileging white expectations and cultural norms over black realities and subjugations. Yet, the way these characters move beyond it is through the unsaid that articulates their existence through means beyond simply the written form.

Chapter II

The Nexus of Black Memory: The Multilayered and Historical Traumas in Afro-Caribbean Diasporic Subjects.

Piérdase el mundo, encadenados caigan
Los deleites preciosos de la tierra
En el profundo golfo de la nada.
Húndete, húndete, estancia lastimera
Ingrato sueño, sombra miserable,
Engaño de la especie, que en tu esfera
Un mísero destierro va pasando.

— Juan Francisco Manzano, "Desesperación"

In her essay “The Site of Memory,” Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison states that her job as a black female writer is to rip the veil off “proceedings too terrible to relate.” Morrison goes on to say that within her writing she:

> [...] must trust my own recollections. I must also depend on the recollections of others. Thus memory weighs heavily in what I write, in how I begin and in what I find to be significant… These 'memories within' are the subsoil of my work. But memories and recollection won't give me total access to the unwritten interior life of these people. Only the act of imagination can help. (91-92)

Morrison's words are important in understanding the urgency and need to write for African diasporic subjects. These events that are "too terrible" hang in the minds of black subjects in ways that manifest themselves through subtle yet insidious means. Memory weighs heavily on Morrison because it is the collective experience that must be articulated in her work. An experience that through the Middle Passage, slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and now, the era of mass incarceration, has led to persistent struggles regardless of the attempts to unleash the metaphorical and literal chains.

Although she speaks from a specific North American black tradition, Morrison's words are relevant to the works of Haitian-American Edwidge Danticat (b. 1969) and Dominican-American Junot Díaz (b. 1968). These two authors' works are heavily impacted by their connection to the island of Hispaniola and its history of oppression as well as a transnational cultural reality that also permeates their writing. This reality, an unsettled one, adds a layer of complexity to the already existing negotiations from the vestiges of slavery, American occupation on the island, Trujillo's regime, and the American racial conflicts that they must face.

In the previous chapter, I examine how Juan Francisco Manzano's *Autobiografía* articulates a suffering while he lived which shows the contemporary academic mutilation after he died. While post-structuralist such as Michel Foucault have problematized the role of an author and its connection to their work, rarely do we consider that an author is someone who has endured both physical and artistic mutilations.[22] This illuminates the importance of talking about the black embodied experience, which in Manzano's case, makes up part of a man and an artist whose desire to be a poet superseded 19th-century ontological expectations in a way that came through in his writing. Through artistic description, poetic language, and intentional narration, readers can see the vestiges of a man who declares his bodily presence. Writing almost two hundred years later, Díaz and Danticat are writing not as enslaved people but as subjects whose existence continues to suffer from the same white supremacy as Manzano. While their work and existence might have been negated within the parameters of the 20th/21st century, they have not suffered the exact same mutilations as Manzano— and yet, Manzano's experience is in their work.

[22] See Foucault's "What is an author?" (1969)

Similar to the way memory becomes the "subsoil" of her work, the novels in this chapter are these novels are haunted by the recollections of the past along with and as part and parcel of the oppressions of their present. For both Díaz and Danticat, their work echoes the suffering, both current and past, of the writers that came before them, due to which their writing has more than one layer. For them, they articulate history of atrocities since Manzano's day but a changed global structure forces them to echo the reality of blackness in the world. Whereas the first chapter evaluated questions of authorship, trauma, and *testimonio*, this second chapter will look at the layered areas of oppression in the colonial, post-colonial, and decolonial realities that Díaz and Danticat engage. Through these layers, Danticat and Díaz articulate what could be a uniquely Black Memory that continues the intergenerationally historical trauma inherited from slavery and the slave trade and its present reality, while also exposing the intersectional trauma that comes with being a racialized, gendered, and political subjects in the Atlantic world. In the end, this Black Memory articulates a much more complex and diverse sense of suffering that attempts to heal the unfinished reality of trauma by navigating the hauntingly oppressive of their unsaid.[23]

Written to much critical and commercial acclaim, Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) falls within the broader Latinx literature of the US. Following the works of other Hispanic Caribbean-Americans, Díaz combines an urban street language, racial ambiguity, and his transnationality to create a work that articulates

[23] In "Traumatic Pasts, Literary Afterlives, and Transcultural Memory: new directions of literary and media memory studies" (2011) Astrid Erll discusses three different types of traumas studied in literary and media studies which are (1) traumatic pasts, (2) afterlives in literature, (3) transnational and transcultural memory. For this chapter I choose to situate a "Black memory" in all three locations where the historical, literary articulation, and transnational reality of trauma merge together to be indistinguishable. Past and present traumatic events and existences are not clearly articulated for these characters complicating the memory studies further.

the reality of 21st century working-class Latinx communities. However, his novel, and his broader work, differs from other literature in this genre in that he marks a departure from autobiographical texts such as Piri Thomas' *Down These Mean Streets* (1962) or Esmeralda Santiago's *When I was Puerto Rican* (1993); the identity politics of Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992); or the immigration trope of Roberto Fernandez's *Raining Backwards* (1988). Where these texts were pivotal in their time and comprise the reality of the Latinx lack of voice in American writing, Díaz's novel is published in a period where Latinx literature breaks from this autobiographical nature and engages with more complex questions about the state of Dominicans in the US. Similar to Julia Alvarez's 1994 *In the Time of The Butterflies* or Mario Vargas Llosa's *La fiesta del chivo* (2000), Díaz follows a combination of historical fiction, minoritized subjects, and contemporary science fiction in his novel. A self-identified Afro-Latinx writer, Díaz weaves various literary genre's, writing styles, and engages with topics such as race, class, and identity in his writing that complicates and moves away from single identity constructs. With his writing, Díaz is able to show the dynamic nature of 21st century Latinx communities and people of color that adds to the multiplicity in their identity.

Like Díaz, Danticat straddles various realms of writing in her own right. Her novel has been heavily studied already under memory frameworks highlighting the lingering nature of colonialism and trauma within the Haitian context. Additionally, many scholars have examined her in comparison to other black female writers of the 1990's and emphasize how the black female body shows the layered mutilations. Her work follows a similar trajectory of other writers that do not fit into one genre melding the immigrant-American reality like Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their*

Accent, intergenerational suffering in Caribbean women writing such as Jamaica Kincaid's *Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), broadly African-American woman writings, and more contemporary African-American literature that disrupts the idea of who is an African-American such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013). As a black woman writing in the North American context, Danticat manages to weave various historical experiences of black women writers in a contemporary context by following multiple literary traditions at once. In this chapter I continue this line of research by combining both areas of research together rather than exploring them in isolation to expose both the historical and intersectional vestiges of trauma for black subjects in the hemisphere.

Both writers combine different genres of writings, styles, and motifs to create a literature that expands the possibility of what writers of color discuss in their works. In Díaz's case, the different elements allow his work to expose a more nuanced reality for the modern-day Latinx community that straddles various identity, linguistic, political, and economic worlds. Díaz's work moves beyond a simple "I am Latino and let me tell you about it" framework and moves his narrative to a realm that says "I am Latino, so what?" The various traditions Díaz pulls from not only add richness to his work but complicates the identity marker of "Latino" and puts into question contemporary colonial realities. For Danticat, these different elements add to the unfinished suffering of people from the Caribbean, in particular, Caribbean women. Situated in the US, she also is able to discuss the tribulations of black women that suffer a particular harshness for being both black and female. Both of these writers expose a trauma and suffering that did not end with the abolition of slavery in 1804 for Haiti and 1865 for Santo Domingo but has persisted.

These traumas and suffering continue, not in metaphor but in reality, into the present combining the oppression of being black (or brown), gendered, and poor together in a kaleidoscopic memory formation.

This intergenerational, historical, and intersectional trauma of black subjects is explored in Junot Díaz's *Oscar Wao* where readers follow various storylines surrounding one Dominican family as they try to lead their lives with the vestiges of racism, sexual abuse, and colonialism that continue to impact their daily existence. Crossing space and time, the novel focuses on the Cabral family and their unresolved traumas that begins in the Dominican Republic but continue as they immigrate to New Jersey. These traumas begin with the sexual abuse of Belicia Cabral, the family's strong-willed mother, who was abandoned at an early age and carries the scars of her abuse from the island with her to the US. These scars are transferred to her children, Oscar de León and Lola, who attempt to navigate their two worlds as both Hispanic and black in a place that imposes existential struggles. Oscar, the namesake of the book, is an obese "nerd" who prefers video games to sports but is an insatiable romantic whose inability to get a girlfriend puts into question Dominican hypermasculinity. Lola, a spunky Afro-Latinx women, struggles to come to terms with her mother's abuse and the oppressive expectations of her Dominican family. She is smart and strong-willed, like her mother, but recognizes the social injustices she must face and rails against them. Both Oscar and Lola are faced with white patriarchal expectations that ultimately continue and cement racial and gendered stereotypes that are structured to oppress. Finally, there is Yunior, the narrative voice of most of the novel who is in love with Lola and tells the story of how the Cabral family tries to make peace with their unsettled past and regrets. The novel has several storylines within the same

family following Belicia's life on the island, her ancestors' misguided deeds, her move to the US, and her battle with cancer. As for Oscar, the reader follows him in the US as he navigates college and falls in love with Yolanda that ultimately leads to his demise on the island by "Trujillo's thugs." Interspersed with these characters there is the Trujillo Regime that haunts the family and La India, a grandmotherly-like sage character who takes care of Belicia and continues to serve as a voice of wisdom for both Oscar and Lola. Through multiple narrators, eras, locations, and footnotes *Oscar Wao* allows for the contemplation of issues of race, sex, gender, and colonialism in such a way that emphasizes the interwoven nature of these layered oppressions through the structure of the novel itself.

Where Trujillo is an echo to the Cabral family, he becomes an ever-present threat in Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1998) where the reader follows Amabelle Desir on her journey back to Haiti during the 1937 Parsley Massacre. Although a fictionalized recreation of this Haitian genocide, Danticat depicts the vestiges of the central traumatic event while having Amabelle and other characters grapple with centuries of racial abuse and poverty on the island of Hispaniola. In the novel Amabelle suffers two main traumas: first, the death of her family while crossing a river to the Dominican Republic, and second the Parsley Massacre itself where Trujillo's men round up and kill thousands of Haitians living on in the borderland region of the island. Both tragedies guide Amabelle throughout the novel but never allow her to be at peace. The initial trauma leaves Amabelle orphaned at the age of eight and she works for Don Ignacio and his daughter Señora Valencia who is close to Amabelle's age. As tensions begin to rise and rumors emerge that Trujillo wants to purge the country of Haitians, Amabelle contemplates

leaving the relatively safe location of the Don Ignacio's ranch for the treacherous journey to Haiti. Initially staying behind to care for Señora Valencia, Amabelle decides to leave for Haiti as the reports of the Trujillo army killing Haitians is confirmed, leaving the border town of Dajabón with Yves, a friend of her lover Sebastien. While in this town, Amabelle and her entourage are harassed by Dominican teens and are forced to say the word "parsley" in order to prove they are Dominican, which is where the name of the massacre stems from. Amabelle and Yves are badly beaten and eventually make their way to Yves' hometown, both staying with his family while they recuperate. She leads her life in Haiti and as an older woman goes back to Don Ignacio's ranch in an attempt to find a peace that will never come. Like Díaz's text, the novel is layered with traumas both past and present that sit together simultaneously, never allowing the subjects to move on. The economic forces that lead Annabelle's family to the Dominican Republic and the racist movement that causes her to flee stem from the same traumas black subjects around the world must overcome: white supremacy.

In the end, both authors show the reader a multilayered reality of blackness on the island of Hispaniola and their transnational subjectivities. Both authors are writing from the US context yet have one foot on the island and the other globally. They bring with them the racial construct of the island to the US while also grappling with racial conflicts in the US. With the two novels as a case studies to the broader experience of black subjects in the diaspora, I examine how these characters disrupt the linear and single-layered nature of memory studies. Specifically, I choose to build off of Michael Rothberg's "multidirectional memory" in which he dissects current memory theory and exposes how memory is not a linear process but one that is influenced by various

perspectives and cultural traditions.[24] I continue with Cathy Caruth's explanation of the articulation of trauma in writing and Marianne Hirsch's notion of "intergenerational memory" to show how, for black subjects, memory is both multidirectional and intergenerational as it moves from parents to children, continuing the unspoken haunting passed on from the initial traumatic event. Together, I show how these theories help speak to the way trauma is articulated in black subjects but highlight the limits to these conceptualizations.

Therefore, memory for black subjects is not expressed only in a metaphorical sense but also exposes the white supremacy that continues to subjugate their bodies today. While studies that explore memory for black subjects tend to focus on the vestiges of slavery within a historical context along with ideas of space and place in what Pierre Nora calls “sites of memory,” I use these novels as articulations of memory which is inherently fluid, multifold, and interconnected to various current sufferings as to not be distinguishable from previous past atrocities.[25] Taking from Sadiya Hartman's "The Time of Slavery" (2002), I show how the characters in Díaz and Danticat's texts live the vestiges of slavery in the structural reality of poverty and the legacy of the Trauma of Trujillo's regime, an event that serves as a manifestation of white structural oppression. By evaluating the sexual assault Belicia Cabral endures, Amabelle’s malaise, the remnants of the Trujillo’s autocratic rule, the abuses on the black body, and the haunting

[24] In “Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response” (2008) Michael Rothberg discusses the Euro-American centric view of trauma studies in terms of its white focus, linearlity, and gendered norms. I take up these issues in this chapter as well and add the indistinguishable nature of traumas for black subjects in the Americas. Rothberg’s multidirectional memory framework allows this project an inherent fluidity that allows to decolonize memory studies.

[25] For more on the intersection between memory and Africana studies see Ana Lucia Araujo’s *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in Public Places* (2012) and *Shadows of Slaves Past: Memory, Heritage, and Slavery* (2014) among other texts, where she engages with sites of memory for slavery across the Americas.

of the past in the present merge together to reveal a Black Memory, where multiple traumas and oppressions are articulated simultaneously through the black body. Constituting this new layered reality includes national and racial constructs across Latin America and the Caribbean and the transnational context of their diasporas that must contend with the racial make-up of the US. For the characters in these novels, the system that caused the atrocities of slavery and the Middle Passage led to the atrocities of the Trujillo Regime and his Parsley Massacre, the racial negation of blackness, and the overall malaise of their present existence. In the end, for black subjects it's not a residue of the past, but the stench of the present, manifesting itself in the social hierarchies, inequalities, global oppression, and racialization that continues their abuse today.

The Layers of Memory and Trauma on the Black Female Body

Constructions of memory within any person or society is both a collective and an individual experience that feeds off of each other adapting to the cultural reality of the time (Halbwachs 51)[26]. This is true in the case of black subjects in the Atlantic world, where through their loss of culture have had to create bonds with different cultures and peoples in the Americas. While many scholars have explored the vestiges of traumatic events within a present state, these texts reveal how for black subjects the same traumatic events that caused the atrocities of the past are the same ones that continue the subjugation of today. This continuity complicates the prevailing idea within memory studies that subjects are merely understanding the event after the fact but rather for black

[26] The corpus of memory studies is expansive and the different forms of memory that exist across discipline encompass a wide array of interests, both political and epistemic. I situate this chapter in the memory studies constructions of the last quarter of the 20th and first part of the 21st centuries since theorists such as Michael Rothburg, Andreas Huyssen, and Allison Landsberg, among others, begin to acknowledge that various socio-cultural factors that influence memory constructions.

subjects they are living the experience while simultaneously attempting to reconcile the past. With this in mind, Michael Rothberg manages to provide a framework that shows the multifaceted nature of memory and trauma that moves past a singular directional mode. His framework provides a more nuanced and complex understanding of trauma proving to be useful in exemplifying the articulation of memory for Afro-diasporic subjects. In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009), Rothberg makes the case that memory is impacted by many different forces along with other group's traumatic experience, influencing people who have no relation to the initial trauma. He believes that memory is a concept that is malleable and adaptable to continual reconstruction (5). Rothberg provides for an opening into new conceptions of trauma and memory especially for minoritized subjects that have been negated from the "winning" discourse of memory constructs. There is no doubt that the Jewish Holocaust has allowed for the articulation of suffering by other groups that have been marginalized, as Rothberg argues, and that constructions of the past are linked to both the individual and the collective memory concurrently. By framing multidirectional memory in a postmodern and decolonial context, Rothberg allows for constructions that are not linked to metaphors, such as suggesting a "black Holocaust" to emphasize the atrocities of slavery and slave trade, but rather articulations that are faithful to those who are articulating them.

Rothberg is not the only scholar discussing the broader impact an interconnected world has on the way societies construct memories. Alison Landsberg's notion of "prosthetic memories" takes into account how theorization of the Holocaust within a broader social norm has led to the usage of other victim's collective memories to be used

by those who have not experienced the traumatic event themselves nor have a relation to it. Similar to Manzano's echo, the kaleidoscopic unsaid in memorial articulation is linked to an outside other not merely stemming from the black reality. The memory is thus filtered through other enunciation highlighting the lack of linearlity in the way black subjects engage with their trauma. Landsberg's framework shows how other subjects can commandeer memory which leaves the individual domain and enters a public space that allows it to evolve and be fluid. Of interest to me for this work is her analysis of how black writers discuss the issue of slavery in their text. Landsberg analyses how formers enslaved people were completely cut off from their ancestral histories and cultures that led to a *kinlessness* in the psyche of black slaves across the US to which they try to recuperate by constructing memories of the past relationships through writing. Landsberg argues that these black authors construct the memory of a traumatic past they did not live by using language that alludes to the enslaved subjectivity creating a prosthetic memory. Although I agree with Landsburg's broader assessment, I find the limitations in the idea that what these black authors are only articulating a memory of slavery in a way that is passed on through their family members. Obviously, black subjects today are not experiencing the same slavery that their ancestors' experienced, but what they are articulating are the vestiges of the current traumas muddled by the unresolved nature of past ones. The institution of slavery left a legacy far beyond the atrocities of the cruel beatings and dehumanizing treatment, but there exists a certain "social death,"[27] where

[27] Lisa Marie Cacho's text *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (2012) argues that one of the vestiges of slavery is how black people have been legally pushed out of the system that pretends to extend equal rights to all by legislating actions associated with black people in the US essentially criminalizing black bodies. She extends this framework to other communities of color.

legally and socially, black subjects, and people of color broadly, suffer oppression daily. For black subjects it is not that they are experiencing only the residue of slavery but rather the reality of the present continues to form a residue on their consciousness that is unforgiving and perpetual.

In *Oscar Wao*, original traumas and current ones are muddled in the form of what the narrator calls the "Fukú americanus," a curse of unknown origin, breaking up genealogical constructs of origin and memory. The fukú lingers throughout the text as the source of problems, traumas, and uncertainties both past and present weaving multiple atrocities together. The nebulous origin and definition of the fukú highlights the legacy of trauma on African diasporic subjects, not knowing the past fully, not knowing which trauma completely, but knowing they exist. Michelle Wright in the "The Middle Passage Epistemology" problematizes the Middle Passage construct because it is linked to the Western idea of progress and chronology to create a black diasporic emergence that is inherently nonlinear.[28] While the Middle Passage and ideas of returning back to Africa have long been tropes in the psyche of the African diaspora, stories of origin are more complex than generally thought and family genealogies are incoherent because of the inherent power structure that stripped black families of their roots (Wright 49-50). Furthermore, the constant movement that emerged and abuses and rapes and off springs that are born of those rapes also complicate the ideas of origin that subjects in the African diaspora often claim (51). We see problems of origin in the formation of the fukú since according to the narrator, "They say it came first from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved; that it was the death bane of the Tainos, uttered just as one world perished

[28] See *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology* (2007)

and another began; that it was a demon drawn open in the Antilles" (1). The fukú's uncertain past leads to the troubles and the haunting throughout the text is clear paralleling the unknowable beginning of the diaspora but how an uneasiness that continues in the lived reality of the characters. The narrator continues saying:

> No matter what its name of provenance, it is believed that the arrival of Europeans on Hispaniola unleashed the fukú on the world, and we've all been in the shit ever since. Santo Domingo might be fukú's Kilometer Zero, its port of entry, but we are all of us its children, whether we know it or not (1-2).

The narrator continues by explaining how the fukú is still relevant to the present with anecdotes of people "dying" from the fukú or other tribulations that are accredited to the entity. How this myth then emerges as haunting throughout the text underscores the unresolvability and malleability that is the trauma of black subjects in this novel complicating ideas of memory and origin. The various manifestations throughout the text and on the bodies of these characters highlights the continuous nature of trauma, indistinguishable from its origin and which traumatic event is being discussed.

For Belicia, this muddled past further complicates her origin and the broader ideas of trauma for black subjects by moving them away from a singular source and into more complex, ephemeral, and structural events. In the beginning of the text Belicia's family heritage is not clear and once orphaned lives with a relative of the family who takes care of her as if she was her own daughter. From the onset of the novel, Belicia Cabral partially belongs to the Trujillo regime, the elite class of Dominican society, and the common people that Trujillo tried to control. We see that she comes from a great family as the narrator describes, "La inca would recount for Beli her family's illustrious history

while they pounded and wrung dough with her bare hands (Your father! Your mother! Your sister! Your house!)…"(78). According to the narrator, Abelard Cabral was one of the finest doctors of the country having studied in Mexico City for some time and he clearly states that the Cabral's "were as you might of guessed, members of the Fortunate People" (213). Later in the novel the narrator explains the strange situation of this "orphaned girl" where her whole family was murdered due to her father's "slandered and gross calumny against the Person of the President" from a series of jokes Abelard made about the President. Throughout the text we see the brute force Trujillo used in order to stay in power and control his people, vestiges that are felt long after his death and in the diaspora. The death of Belicia's father is just one of many examples that abound, echoing the *kinlessness* in Landsberg's theorization suggests.

After her father's death she lived with a series of abusive foster families that remain a mystery to the reader with the narrator calling this part of the family's life "una página en blanco." Belicia eventually is saved by "La Inca" a motherly figure who biological relationship to the Belicia remains unclear throughout the novel. The city where they live, Baní, becomes a home for Belicia and connects her to the broader Dominican community rather than just part of the elite. Yunior explains, "She lived in those days in Baní… This was the lovely Baní of times past, beautiful and respectful. A city famed for its resistance to blackness and it was here alas that the darkest character in our story resided" (78). Yunior goes on narrating stories of mundane Dominican community life especially her life with La Inca where they bake together and share stories and listen to "Carlos Moya's radio and the sound of butter applied to Beli's ruined back. Days of Mangoes, days of bread" (78). The life of the average Dominican is

connected in racial term with his reference to the city's resistance to blackness but also just day-to-day workings of the people along with how Belicia's back is "ruined" presumably from the beatings she has endured. This connection to both the Dominican elite and the common folk makes Belicia Cabral a manifestation of the Dominican people and the haunting that they experience due to the atrocities of the regime. Thus, Belicia— her place in society, the brutality on her body, the violence towards her children, and transnational reality— becomes a manifestation of the collective haunting that this country endures after the Trujillo regime has ended.

Belicia's body throughout the novel collectivizes the Dominican experience as a whole, not limited by class and race, but rather forcing her to straddle different subjectivities that were all effected by the *Trujillato* and thus, her body shows the layers of trauma as both a black woman and a Dominican. From this beginning of *Oscar Wao*, Belicia Cabral shows an uneasiness about herself that I would posit is the haunting of the Trujillo regime and something that is manifested of her body. Belicia was unsettled in her status as being the daughter of one of the most upstanding members of Baní's community. The narrator explains, "Everything about her present life irked her; she wanted, with all her heart, something else. When this dissatisfaction entered her heart she could not recall, would later tell her daughter that it has been with her all her life, but who knows if this is true?" (79). Belicia lives the overall dissatisfaction in the Dominican psyche that is unsettled due to the complicated nature of trauma. Belicia exposes the layered reality of trauma: her blackness, her sexual abuse, the Trujillo dictatorship, and her immigration to the US in one body. This trauma exposes the haunting of the

Dominican people's inability to settle their collective past experience through her body becoming the literary manifestations of the haunting that cannot not be resolved.

In *Demonic Grounds* (2006), Katherine McKittrick explains how the black female body serves as a manifestation of the traumas seen by a society. Specifically, McKittrick discusses about how the slave ship and spatial changes are represented in black female bodies due to the silencing from both white men and men of any given diasporic society (xvi-xvii). Many scholars have defined the African diaspora by constant movement, as seen through the theories of Paul Gilroy, space and place take a whole new meaning for the writers and people of the Black Atlantic. McKittrick makes clear that definitions of space and place are concepts created by society and that the silences experienced by the black female bodies are a result of the people within the societies not something that is inherently a human trait and she notes, "black women's geographies open up a meaningful way to approach both the power and possibilities of geographic inquiries" (xii). What these geographies provide is a cross-section between the body and the hierarchies of power within a society where certain kinds of bodies play certain roles in any given social context. Specifically, black females have a muted role because the sexual and violent abuse as a captive human and in the case of Belicia, her body becomes a map of the brutality both within the context of Trujillo and the aftermath of his regime. To McKittrick, the black body is the vehicle for a haunting because of the various levels of oppressions that are faced in a white-male dominated society. What makes Belicia Cabral especially important to the formation of this haunting is that black female bodies, according to McKittrick, exemplify a negotiation that occurs within a society. She states:

> [black women] are negotiating a geographic landscape that is upheld by a legacy of exploitation, exploration and conquest. If we imagine that traditional geographies are upheld by their three-dimensionality, as well as corresponding language insides and outsides, borders and belongings, and inclusions and exclusions, we can expose domination as a visible spatial project that organizes, names, and sees social difference (such as black femininity) and determines *where* social orders happen. (xiv)

Belicia Cabral's body becomes the visible manifestation of these power structures and their dominations over a people. The scars that are seen along with the slow decay of her body because of cancer become physical realities of her experience of being both black and a woman in a society that subjugates (and rejects) both. This legacy is passed onto her children through the violence she exerts on them, especially Lola, and the verbal abuse she imposes on Oscar. For both children, they may not fully understand their mother's rage but the ramifications of this legacy are real. Belicia Cabral is where the social order happens of the unresolvability of the Dominican haunting.

For Belicia, the social order is seen through the violence on her body when she is beaten by one of Trujillo's "goons." Belicia falls in love with a character that the narrator calls "the gangster" and we later find out that he is Trujillo's brother-in-law making her pregnancy is unacceptable. In this relationship Belicia eventually gets pregnant and is forced to give up the baby but not without a fight. After cornering her in a park in order to perform an abortion she gets away but is eventually caught and beaten. Yunior narrates:

> How she survived I'll never know. They beat her like she was a slave. Like she was a dog. Let me pass over actual violence and report instead on the damage inflicted: her clavicle, chicken-bones; her right humerus, a triple fracture (she would never again have much strength in that arm); five ribs, broken; left kidney, bruised; liver, bruised, right lung, collapsed; front teeth blown out. About 167 points of damage in total and it was only sheer accident that these motherfuckers didn't eggshell her cranium… (147)

The depiction of the different body parts shows the fragmentation of the traumatic experience of the past at once incomplete and ever-present along with the brute force that Belicia endured at the hands of Trujillo's "goons." In this lengthy recover Belicia loses her child from the beating allowing Trujillo and his regime to win. This bodily violation on Belicia exemplifies the way violence left literal scars on Belicia but also psychological scars on the Dominicans in general. The loss of her baby shows how the female body is a pawn in the social fabric of the society and how the trauma represented through the black female body has rippled effects.

The violence Belicia experiences creates an inability to make sense of the trauma she is experiencing, whether it be her blackness, her femininity or a combination of the two, mirrors how these atrocities are often not fully legible within societal constructs, like many traumas tend to be. How everything about her life irking her to the violence she imposes on her to children to her cancer become the residue of the trauma, being understood in a latent manner. According to Cathy Caruth trauma has an inherent unintelligibility and she shows how articulating trauma is a difficult endeavor due to the latency in remembering. Speaking to Freud's ideas of the Moses legend Caruth notes:

> The experience of trauma… would thus seem to consist, not in forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in the inherent latency within the experience itself. The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experiences at all. And it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of the Jew's historical experience: since the murder is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time. (17)

Caruth's notion of the latency of memory mirrors how black subjects manage to articulate the lingering nature of the trauma that occurred during slavery and the slave trade. For Díaz and Danticat this latency is seen through both a layered (palimpsestic) and lateral constructs of memory where multiple historical and contemporary traumas are meshed together, creating an inability to distinguish one atrocious event from another, but always knowing that it exists. In the end, the distinction of which event is articulate does not matter as much as the fact that black subjects articulate them concurrently.

Moreover, this latency for black writers is complicated since they never resolve the trauma of the past as it continues. Black subjects experience the trauma of their forbearers similar to Marianne Hirsch's "post-memory" that links them to their ancestors in an intimate and material way. This transfer is complicated since the actual memory or experience is not transferred but rather the silences and vestiges that remain, still shaping the way subjects engage with the world but never fully connected to the traumatic event itself. Hirsch notes, "it is a structure of inter- and trans- generational transmission of

traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of a traumatic recall but (unlike, post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove" (106). Like the subjects studied by Hirsch in the Argentinian context, the trauma in these second-generation victims is passed on through the discourse of their parents. This can be seen in societies that have had the power to move past and attempt to reconcile the events of a past society, but black subjects do not have this luxury. Yes, they also relive the past through the discourse of their parents and grandparents, but the systemic structure that caused the suffering of the slave, is the same system that creates such events as the Parsley Massacre or Apartheid in South Africa. The specific events are less important since the system of black negation as subjugation remains. Black subjects then do not only live their own present traumas but carry the weight of all the black traumas of their forbearers as seen through the nebulous past of Belicia Cabral and the remnants of her family's memory in Amabelle's narration.

This layered haunting has been seen in the Caribbean for some time, and the region provides for an articulation because of its complexity. This is similar to the "forced poetics" we see in Maznano's case as articulated by Eduard Glissant where language muddies the identity of the people of the Caribbean by playing power politics within the realm of language with the battle between Creole and French. He shows how this unresolved tension within language is a manifestation of the troubled unconscious of the people due to the powerlessness of the people's state as a Caribbean and colonized subjects which leads them to violence, depression and forms of hysteria. In the novel Belicia Cabral is constantly exercising her brute violence onto her to children when they don't follow what she wants them to do. Oscar's sister, Lola, is constantly fighting with

her mother for a variety of reasons, stating, “As kids, me and Oscar were more scared of our mother than we were of the dark o el cuco. She would hit us anywhere, in front of anyone, always free with the chanclas and the correa…” (54). But the violence doesn’t just end as an anecdotal element within the book, but many situations have to do with her fight with her mother physically. After she cut her hair, Belicia told her daughter that she had to wear a wig but the daughter decided she didn’t want to do. After a argument that left them fighting they were tense and Belicia would just be violent towards her daughter. Lola relates, “…sometimes without warning she would grab me by my throat and hang on until I pried her fingers from me. She didn’t bother talking to me unless it was to make death threats” (61). Belicia's violence serves as an intergenerational violence that is exerted. Her inability to move past it shows the traumas of the past and how they are carried on by generation. What we see with her actions and her words are manifestations of unresolved terrors that are experienced by the Dominican people.

In a 2012 interview with Paula Moya from *Boston Review*, Junot Díaz himself discusses how trauma is transferred from mother to child based on rape. In his novel the main character Oscar de León finds it difficult to have sexual intercourse with a girl and although on the surface it has to do with the fact that Oscar is fat and nerdy and to a certain extent there are some racial undertones due to Oscar blackness. In the interview Díaz makes the point that it could have to do with the rape of his mother. Díaz states:

> Perhaps one of the reasons Oscar ain’t getting laid is because he is the son of a survivor of horrific sexual violence. In the same way that there is intergenerational transfer of trauma from mothers who are rape victims to their daughters, there is also intergenerational transfer of rape trauma between mothers

> and their sons. But most readers don't notice how Oscar embodies some of the standard reactions of young rape victims to their violations. …. His fatness was partially a product of what's going on in the family in regards to their bodies, in regards to the rape trauma. (Moya)

Although the bodies are all intertwined in respect to the black female body and its relation to rape culture, Díaz clearly states how he views his own character as a product of a violent society. Díaz continues by explaining that he believes that the family is haunted by the rape culture of Trujillo's regime, stating:

> The rape culture of the European colonization of the New World—which becomes the rape culture of the Trujillato (Trujillo just took that very old record and remixed it)—is the rape culture that stops the family from achieving decolonial intimacy, from achieving decolonial love. (Moya).

Díaz explains how he believes this trauma exposes a silencing of a sexual kind in this Cabral family but stops short from connecting this horrific experience to broader Dominican psyche. His representation of the rape and the connection between the rape of the mother along with the repressed sexual experiences of Oscar and Belicia all highlight the violent traumatic experience of the Dominicans in the Dominican Republic. What Díaz does in this text is he makes the black female body a manifestation of this extreme trauma and does not allow the people to completely move forward.

The trauma that these characters attempt to articulate is not isolated to the Caribbean, nor to the Afro-Caribbean subjects of the region, but moves beyond this one Sea. In her 1992 literary criticism *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Toni Morrison discusses the role black bodies play in the North American

literary tradition. Toni Morrison states that, "The ways in which artists—and the society that bred them—transferred internal conflicts to a 'black darkness,' to conveniently bound and violently silenced black bodies, is a major theme in American Literature" (38). Although Morrison is speaking to an African-American context where the black-white binary dominates discussions on race, Díaz's transnational subjectivity, along with the transnational reality of the novel, both exposes and emphasizes a broader black diasporic connection. Not only does Díaz expose the silencing based on the US cultural context (Belicia Cabral does eventually immigrate to the U.S. after all) but also the complex, and oft times tense, racial narratives that are faced in the Dominican Republic, especially with a brutal dictator who deemed himself white and deemed the racial makeup of the entire country to be white.

Trujillo's national racial constructs is the living trauma of the global system of slavery and slave trade that led to the subjugation of black and brown bodies that we see today. African diasporic subjects are connected through one common event in their ancestral history of slavery and the slave trade as Paul Gilroy discusses in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1995).[29] Gilroy works to deconstruct modern discussions of black culture and breaks down borders along with other geographic markers in order to unite blackness under one broad transatlantic experience. Gilroy uses the slave ship as the primary symbol in which all diasporic Africans are connected saying, "the ship is the first of the novel chronotopes presuppose

[29] I believe Gilroy begins the discussion of a broader black consciousness in the diaspora, although his analysis is limited through the emphasis of the Anglophone world with minor references of the African diaspora of Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean. The exclusion of these spaces limits his broader analysis in that he is not including theoretically or spatially a more exclusive racial narratives in these countries and territories.

by my attempts to rethink modernity via the history of the black Atlantic and the African diaspora into the western hemisphere" (17). Moreover, Gilroy discusses how the African diaspora is not a homogenous people, but rather individuals who come from many different cultures and languages across the continent. Gilroy emphasizes the transformation and movement of the Black Atlantic stating, "the cartography of dispersal and exile is perhaps best understood as a simple and direct response to the varieties of racism which have denied historical character of black experience and the integrity of black cultures" (112). The connection these subjects have is linked by the same global structure and Gilroy's metaphor of the ship provides for a connection that leads to a common bond. This bond is less cohesive than Western ideas of nationality and echoes back to Landsberg's *kinlessness* and provides for a fluidity in relations that are not linked to strict national borders. The characters in both texts move between international borders breaking ideas of belonging and pushing against the systems that oppress them. The image of the border in Danticat's text that occurs throughout the novel along with the reality that the river is inherently fluid further emphasizes the arcane origin of the Parsley Massacre. For Díaz, the national borders between Oscar, Lola, and Belicia's experience in New Jersey and the fluid nature of both time and space adds to the continuity in the African diasporic experience of the 20th and 21st century.

The Dominican Republic and Haiti share a long and tragic history from the earliest days of colonization to the dictatorships of Leonidas Trujillo and François Duvalier. The two countries are two sides of the same coin separated only by a porous 375-kilometer border that serves not only as an international demarcation, but the location where two cultures have been intermingling and exchanging customs and

traditions for centuries. Or, as Haitian scholar Eugenio Matibag calls it, an "interstitial region for interactions" (14). Two rivers define much of the border, one that flows north called the Dajabón River or Massacre River and one that flows south called the Riviere Pedernales (21). The river is commonly known as The Massacre River, the name stemming from a colonial era killing of French buccaneers by Spanish soldiers, today however, the river is associated with the 1937 killing of thousands of Haitian migrants living in the Dominican Republic. The Parsley Massacre, as it is known, was the product of both international state crafting on the island and historical *antihaitianismo* in the Dominican Republic (Matibag 145). The origins of the Trujillo's command to kill all the Haitians on the border are not precisely known, but it is certain that he gave the command to kill (146). Rumors began to spread that Haitians were being killed due to their inability to properly pronounce the word *perejil,* or parsley, in Spanish. Other rumors abound but this tale became the moniker of the 1937 genocide. Both the interconnected nature of Haitians and Dominicans along with the tragedy of the Parsley Massacre come together in Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* to share the story of not so commonly told event.

The shared history and cultural fusion between the two countries on the island can be seen throughout the text and provides an unsettling backdrop to the atrocities in Danticat's novel. Amabelle considers the Duarte family, the people who took her in after her parent's death, as part of her family albeit in an unsure manner. She states and questions several times in the novel this idea that Señora Valencia and her family "are the closest things to kin" (110) she has in the world. Amabelle was found young shortly after the death of her parents by Don Ignacio, Señora Valencia's father, and taken to their farm to be the Señora's personal servant. Their act of kindness makes Amabelle question

whether or not she should leave when the violence towards Haitians begins to worsen, however, she realizes that she will never be a part of the family. Even at the height of the violence of the novel where Amabelle is made to say the infamous word she asserts her ability to say *perejil* in Spanish saying, "At that moment I did believe that had I wanted to, I could have said the word properly, calmly, slowly, the way I often asked "Perejil?" of the old Dominican women..." (193). She straddles the line of being part of and distant to the Dominicans, a metaphor for the broader relationship between the two countries. Moreover, Amabelle serves as the wet-nurse that births the children further tying her to the family. She is the first person to hold Rafi, the first twin born, stating, "I proudly raised the child from between her legs and held him up so she could see" (9). After the birth of her twins, it becomes obvious that Rosalinda, the female twin, is darker in skin color than her brother, Señora Valencia remarks to Amabelle that she hopes people do not confuse her for one of her people, meaning the Haitians (12). This separates Amabelle from this family and this society as a whole but serves to highlight the way these two countries are intricately connected.

While in popular culture people are aware of the tensions between Dominicans and Haitians, in reality the global ontological and economic exclusion of Haiti is a fabrication of a non-existent threat underscoring how the imposition of global racial dichotomy on the island. Edward Paulino, in his book *Dividing Hispaniola: the Dominican Republic's Border Campaign Against Haiti, 1930-1961* (2016) shows how the threat of the Haitian Other is one cemented by Trujillo yet filled with contradictions. Using a variety of cultural, political, and economic examples, Paulino explains how the connection between the two countries his fraught with tensions. Where the Dominican

Republic was the first country to provide humanitarian aid to the earthquake ravaged Haitian side, or cultural exchange on a porous border, Paulino shows his reader that the divide between the two countries is more exaggerated than real. With this, Paulino shows that during the Trujillo dictatorship an increase of white racial categories emerges in a country that did not see a large influx of European migration. Moreover, the country nearly entirely rejects blackness for a fabricated *mulatez* in its census data further cementing the white national construct. The racial fabrications stem from a global racial influence that manifests itself in local ways and ultimately leads to the oppression of all on the island. Danticat and Díaz take these complex racial constructs and their transnational existences to create two novels that address the traumatic reality of black life.

Therefore, the birth of Señora Valencia's twins serves as an allegory of the two countries where Rafael is born strong while the girl Rosalinda is born weak and fragile. Amabelle describes the birth, "A little girl gasped for breath, a thin brown veil, like layers of spider webs, covering her face, the umbilical cord had curled itself in a bloody wreath around her neck, encircling every inch between her chin and shoulders" (10). Rosalinda serves as a metaphor for the Haitian people as a whole especially how they must fight for every breath they take. This point is further highlight when the family Doctor makes an observation about the survival of the newborn girl. As Amabelle talks to him about the birth he asks her how the little girl struggled. Amabelle explains and Doctor Javier comments, "It's as if the other one tried to strangle her" (19). The doctor's comment serves to further highlight the fraught relationship between the two countries and its people. Both countries birthed out of a struggle with colonialism and imperial forces,

which one sees in Señora Valencia's European features, and yet Dominicans stridently try to strangle their own blackness through the violent acts placed on Haitians. In the final chapter Señora Valencia reveals that she hid some Haitians from being murdered during what was called "la corte", hiding people in Amabelle's hut in the back of the house. She explains this to Amabelle who is neither satisfied nor rattled by the story and simply wants the anecdote to end (300). Señora Valencia attempts to make peace with her past actions, carrying the weight of her own history, but in the end revealing the tense relationship between her and Amabelle and Haiti and the Dominican Republic. She invites Amabelle to stay the night at the house but Amabelle wants to leave, ultimately not finding the closure that she was seeking and will continue to seek.

This fluidity in border and the national fraternity of the Dominican Republic and Haiti complicates the fixed notion of nationality and belonging in Western discourse. Similarly, this fraternity reflects the continuous nature of the structures of slavery that persists today breaking the temporal singularity within memory studies. Saidiya Hartman takes on the question of the presence of slavery in daily North African American consciousness and the material vestiges slavery has left on African-Americans in the form of poverty, crime, and the pathologization of blackness. In her essay "The Time of Slavery" (2002) puts into contestations the issue of history and time when slavery takes on a different iteration today for black subjects. Harman criticizes both the way slavery presents itself in modern society and the monetization of sites of memory.[30] She states:

[30] Both Andreas Huyssen in "Present Pasts: Media, Politics and Amnesia" (2000) and Sturken in *Tangled Memories* (1997) comment on the monetization and the impact it has on the creation of memory. For both, the economic influence it has muddles the construct of national ideologies. While this point is important to highlight, the way black enslaved people were commodified and the subsequent stifling of progress through economic pressures both in the US and Haiti plays a more sinister role in the memory formation of black

> While remembering the ‘‘anguish of the ancestors’’ is a central aspect of the pilgrimage to these monuments of the transatlantic trade, recursion is also informed by the imperatives and longings of the present. That is, dispossession is itself an inheritance that tethers us to ‘‘that event.’’ Racial subjection, incarceration, impoverishment and second-class citizenship: this is the legacy of slavery that still haunts us. The duration of injury and the seemingly intractable character of our defeat account for the living presence of slavery, and as well for the redress proffered by tourism. (766)

This living presence of history that Hartman points to is part of the trauma that the characters in Díaz and Danticat's texts are articulating. Being black and an immigrant in the US context combines both the racial subjugation of one's home country with the second-class status and racism of the US that produces a multilayered articulation. The fusion of remembering slavery, mourning the loss of a past, and attempts to recuperate a current ontological reality presents problems that are not decipherable in her essay. Hartman's assertion problematizes how memory is constructed and trauma is synthesized for black subjects. Compared to Argentinian scholar Hugo Vezzetti's construction of the "present-past" where the past infiltrates the present through vestiges of memory, politically structured traumas, and attempts at forgetting, Hartman shows that the past is not a residue or lingering notions but rather a real existence in modern society.[31] Yes, Vezzetti acknowledges that the past presents itself "literally" in the way government

subjects compared to what Huyssen and Sturken discuss, since for black subjects, economic links of slavery are integral to modern oppressions.

[31] See *Pasado y presente: guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina* (2002)

officials, human rights organizations, and the society grapples with how to forget. Yet, this differs from the African diasporic experience in that Argentina is a country that fashions itself white and the efforts have been made a national level to reconcile and move on. For black subjects there has not been a systemic effort (be it national, regional, hemispheric, or international) to reconcile the issues of the past allowing the system to constantly fold and converge into new iterations and atrocities. Whether the system is Jim Crow, racist national formations and negations, Civil Rights, economic exclusion, Apartheid, or Mass Incarceration the oppression and subjugation of black bodies in these systems does not allow them to forget but forces them to live trauma. For these post dictatorship societies of the Southern Cone the past lingers in their attempt to obtain justice and persists on as a metaphor, not a daily reality with real material and physical oppressions like it does for black subjects of the Americas.

Together, Rothberg, Landsberg, and Hartman are a springboard to show the different interconnected constructions of memory articulated in Díaz and Danticat's texts reflective of the broader Black Atlantic experience. While Rothberg constructs his theory in disparate communities, the interconnected nature of the Black diasporic experience is where memory begins to form.[32] For Díaz's characters, their trauma is multidirectional, intergenerational, gendered, and transatlantic simultaneously, taking from the broader African diaspora (for instance, in the form of the fukú), the sexual abuse witnessed by Belicia Cabral, and the aftermath of Trujillo and racism in the US. Danticat's characters face a post-colonial reality, intergenerational, and Transatlantic violence in the Haitian

[32] Rothberg fourth chapter entitled "W. E. B. Dubois in Warsaw: Holocaust Memory and the Color Line" is particularly useful in articulating the connection between two different marginalized communities, allowing for the suffering from the Holocaust to help articulate the suffering from slavery.

context through Amabelle's family's longing for a better life, and her sexual impotence. Furthermore, Rothberg's framework shows that the memory for these two authors is also palimpsestic, layered in such a way that breaks away from any single directionality and exists to not be fully recuperated nor can they get away from it. For black diasporic subjects, they articulate the past to mourn the loss of a culture and to push against the system that created their reality today. Because for them, the system that caused the atrocities of slavery and the middle passage, are the same as the ones that caused the Parsley Massacre and the Trujillo Regime. The same white supremacy that caused the atrocities of the past is the same one that causes the atrocities of the present.

The Kaleidoscopic Unsaid of Black Memory

The brutality of Trujillo and his regime along with events like the Parsley Massacre are not the only ways that the trauma persists but also interwoven are the various other subjectivities that the African diaspora must endure. Being poor, transnational, gendered, and nationalized, become new oppressions in a global context that goes beyond the trauma of slavery and the slave trade but rather reinforces the global power structure to produce a traumatic reality and memory articulation that creates this "nexus of black trauma." The end of slavery across Latin America, the Caribbean and North America did not necessarily mean an end to the traumatic reality lived by black subjects across the diaspora. The *de jure* elimination of slavery did not prevent the *de facto* oppression of black bodies, integral to the slave trade and slavery along with the negation from national discourse and material means. That African slaves now had legal freedoms does not negate that the violence within their existence did not end through the colonial nation formation that lead to the absence of blackness and the racial constructs

that lead to markers of inferiority. In the end, black subjects across the diaspora do not move away but continue to experience the trauma of their forebears, eliminating a moment that ends the trauma and fosters its continuation. This continuation from the past into the present is seen in the way both Díaz and Danticat muddle the past and the present in their writing through the black body. Díaz moves back and forth between generations and spaces to point to the global level of the oppression and the generational effect. Danticat demonstrates the same malaise as Díaz along with subtle changes in font size, an inability for Amabelle to reconcile her present, and the analiptic style of the text. These techniques leave the reader with a sense that what was once past is still in the present, unfinished, and intact.

The layered traumas stem from various sources and racial and national constructions continue the negation of black subjects across the region. Black subjectivity is initially negated through slavery and continued through the national formations across Latin America with their ontological subjugation. Unlike the constructions in the United States, that fashioned itself as a country of (white) immigrants, Anglophone and Christian (Quijano 229-30), Latin America from its onset had to contend with the myriad of peoples, cultures, and languages that comprise its reality. Thinkers across the region in the late 19th century and the early 20th century constructed a mix-race narrative as a way to distinguish between its old European colonial masters, and the impending threat of the North American imperialists. Cuban revolutionary José Martí's famous 1891 essay "Nuestra América" calls for an inward look for the region to seek pride and unity among the people of Latin America and the Caribbean rather than looking at Europe.[33] Citing the

[33] Although Martí is writing specifically within Spanish colonial rule of Cuba, his essay has had a major impact in the formation of several national movements in the 20th century, broadening the scope of his

racial diversity that is within all Latin Americans, Martí warns of problems of North American economic imperialism while also warning against the epistemological dangers of past colonial mindset that could be fatal for their existence.

Nearly half a century later, this idea of a mixed raced people is seen throughout the national formations of the region and is even moved further with Fernando Ortiz's book *Contrapunteo del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940). In his seminal work, Fernando Ortiz explains what he calls the transculturation that exists in Cuba. Ortiz explains that acculturation is an incomplete term for the cultural intermixing that occurs on the island because it alludes to the idea that one culture eclipses the other and no exchange happens between them. Ortiz tries to disrupt the hierarchical realities of the intermixing and also idealizes the unique nature of Cuban "transculturation" (93) [34]. Even when he makes the point that other societies have "transcultured" he believes that the Cuban case is different because of the amount of cultures that have been mixed. Like Martí, Ortiz also constructs a prototypical Caribbean, specifically a Cuban subject, that combines characteristics from the various existing racial groups on the continent and the archipelago to form an idealized, and whitened, figure.

This construct was not limited to Caribbean thinkers but in the 1920s Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos takes on this idea of a mixed raced people in his essay "La raza cómsica" (1925). In this text, Vasconcelos elucidates his idealized notion of the racial integration that occurs in Latin America more broadly. He makes the case that a culture reaches its pinnacle of completeness when various races converge together to

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message to the entire region. Also, his essay shows early inceptions of cultural and political cohesion in the region.

[34] Ortiz coins the term *transculturación* to point to the exchange of culture rather than the traditionally viewed idea that it is unidirectional.

make up a new race that he calls the "fifth race." This fifth race is a culmination of the four races that have comprised Latin America: white Europeans, brown indigenous people, African slaves and Asian immigrants (14). In this fifth race, Vasconcelos sees the erasure of past problems and the rich cultural productions of these peoples coming together to form something different from the past. Once again, the basis for Latin American nationalism is based on this idea of intermixing and uniqueness that essentializes what it means to be from the region, ultimately including and excluding certain bodies based on the interests of the theorist who create these national stories.

While both thinkers depart from the historical Eurocentric and white view, both Martí and Vasconcelos have a whitened view of what the region is comprised of, which negates people who do not fall in the traditional lines of the definitions. Specifically, both writers idealized the nobility of the African slaves while adulating the intellectual capabilities of the European colonizers. Vasconcelos goes as far as to say that there were only very few black people in the region which are now all simply mulattoes, recreating the same previous racialized discourse of hierarchies in his new fifth race (22). Furthermore, these constructions of intercontinental unity are predicated on fixed ideas of the nation-state identities and negates the fluidity that is historically inherent in the Caribbean region. In these whitened and fixed constructs people of Latin America perpetuate racist discourse along with creating a self that is represented in a fractured way. This white-washing of cultures is a tragedy that makes Latin Americans continue being what they are not, "and as a result we can never identity our true problems, much less resolve them, except in a partial and distorted way" (Quijano 556).[35] Within this

[35] It is important to note the capitalist factors that lead to both slavery and the exclusion of black subjects from national rhetoric in the region. Post-colonial scholars like Quijano and Mignolo all point to the majo

distortion and by emphasizing a whitened notion of what it means to be a Latin American and a Caribbean subject, these thinkers cemented and reestablished the same European, North American, and colonial epistemological traditions they were trying to escape. In the act of incorporating these narratives in the broader national consciousness, the black subject is manipulated, mutilated and silenced in such a way that the trauma and the impact of slavery persists into contemporary issues. The same structures that produced the colonial reality maintains its stronghold on the new, post-colonial societies that are emerging in the late 19th and early 20th century.

The creation of a nation links the past and the present in a such a way that a narrative is produced and, like nation, race functions in a similar way where groups are clumped together in a way that is fabricated (Balibar, "The Nation Formation: History and Ideology"). [36] However, these fabrications continue the ideological violence, which is coupled with the physical and material violence that occurs on the black body. While for white subjects, constructions of memory become metaphors for the lingering vestiges of suffering of the past, black subjects must not only contend with the unresolved suffering of their ancestors but also the continued violence of the present, and the hopelessness of the same system in the future all in a memory construct. This nexus of black trauma does not distinguish between what was past and what is present, both muddling ideas of memory and articulating new ways of understanding. For Haitians this negation was not just seen at the local or regional level nor was it simply a political one. According to

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effect it has had in the emergence of the region. Additionally, Hartman, Rothberg, Landsburg, comment on how capitalism and media play a role in the way memory is formed. Inadvertently, black subjects are oppressed through these capitalist means which ends up being one of the layers of their oppression.

[36] Balibar states, “Every social community reproduced by functioning of institutions is imaginary… But it comes down to accepting that, under certain conditions, only imaginary communities are real” (93).

Rolph Trouillot the impossibility of the Haitian revolution forced the world to contend with the reality of a black republic. Instead of incorporating this new world order into their consciousness they simply rejected the fact, saddling the country with an insurmountable debt that created an exclusion from global markets and had real economic impact on the country today (95). For the Dominican Republic, Trujillo's racial construct and the rejection of their black history creates an existential crisis that forces them to view themselves in what Quijano calls a distorted way.

For both novels, the global racial oppression and in the intergenerational haunting stem from the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, leader of the Dominican Republic from 1930 until his assassination in 1961. During his thirty year "generalissimo," the Dominican people saw one of the most repressive political regimes in all of Latin America. Trujillo's control over every aspect of the state and the society led to deep scars in the psyche of the Dominican people that one can see to this day. El Caudillo, as he was known, had an all-encompassing ideology that attempted to create a new form of thinking within the country that led to the stamping out of any viable opposition (Wiarda, 102). Unlike other dictators across the world and Latin America, Trujillo did not have a political ideology that advocated for a specific cause other than simply his hold to power (103). What Trujillo does do is manipulate and morph already established norms to serve his own purposes and used the press, the church and the military all to effect control over his people. One of the major tenets of this "ideology" was a notion that he controlled the past, present and future of the state in order to maintain power and manipulate the discourse around several social aspects in the country (105). That he was a mulatto himself did not matter in the construction of the national

rhetoric that the country was white. Trujillo does not create the national idea, he cements already existing ideas of whiteness in the country by fabricating an existential threat posed by Haitians on the island. While some scholars point to his own mulatto heritage as a sign of his hypocrisy, the reality remains that the devastating consequences of his national formation and policy had material and physical ramifications on the island.

This negation of blackness and the whitewashing of the real experience is not just one that lies on national and economic interests but is also one that has been perpetuated through the reason and the subconscious. Frantz Fanon in his 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks*, discusses how black subjects in Martinique, a department of France, constantly strive to be white through memetic articulations of the self (2). Fanon laments the reality of how language is seen as a way of subjugating people and he discusses how black people are chastised for not speaking a perfect French, but when they manage to learn the language to near perfection, they lose themselves and only to reintegrate the colonial relations in their language (4-5). He discusses how language itself is a tool that oppresses Caribbean subjects. Throughout his text Díaz uses a variety of socio-cultural language traditions, such as Dominican Spanish and US urban street language, to break the colonial hold within literature and produce a work of art. According to Daynalí Flores-Rodriguez fluidity in language has long been used in Caribbean literature to break up the power relations between the metropolis and the islands (27-8.) While Díaz's texts fuses the urban street language and Dominican Spanish to produce at times humoristic prose in the face of terror, Danticat's novel is more pensive, producing a sepia quality to the whole text. The difference in style does not undermine the overall lingering nature of memory. Danticat applies this subtly throughout the text, changing the font size ever so

slightly to make the reader both notice the change in story, but also the ever-present nature of the past trauma. The main focus of the second storyline in the novel is her time in Haiti with her parents. The cause of their migration to the Dominican Republic is not known, but one can assume that decades of economic decay and the global economic subjugation of Haiti is not too far off.

While Díaz breaks up the language through the various ways the characters in his book use speak, Danticat makes the different between the pronunciation of parsley in Creole and Spanish a central point of her book that leads to the atrocities within the massacre. In the climax to the book the abuse on the bodies of Amabelle and Yves by shoving parsley down their throat produces a political and physical sense of unspeakably that haunts the entire novel. She describes her personal experience saying:

> Yves and I were shoved done onto our knees. Our jaws were pried open and parsley stuffed into our mouths. My eyes watering, I chewed and swallowed as quickly as I could, but not nearly as fast as they were forcing handfuls into my mouth... I tried to stop listening to the voices ordering the young men to feed us more. I told myself that eating the parsley would keep me alive. (193)

The act of shoving the parsley down the throats of these victims becomes a way to silence their voices that, I would argue, they never had. While silenced, black subjects must find alternative ways to continue onward producing a sound that echoes their "striving" as a people in their collective traumatic experience.[37] The body of these Haitians becomes the "site of memory" for them outlining the struggle they see and feel on a daily basis.

[37] In his book *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) Du Bois discusses the rhythm and sound that defines the anxiety of the African-American experience. I take this notion to stand for the incomplete nature of trauma and the constant "striving" as Du Bois says, that allows for this rhythm to exist.

Danticat weaves idea of language, voice, and the body into one powerful scene the encompasses the inability to speak or be allowed to speak, with the brute force of being silenced. This interwoven scene further emphasizes the interconnected notion producing a nexus of trauma for these characters.

Just like with the abuse on the voice and body, this scene emphasizes Fanon's assertion that black bodies sit in a precarious situation globally and must constantly combat not only real subjugated material existence, but also suffer through epistemological negation. Even Dominican writer and thinker Blas Jiménez chastises the Dominican national constructs in a much more contemporary essay. In his essay entitled "Afrodominicano por elección/negro por nacimiento" (2008), makes clear regarding his development as an Afro-Dominican, it is important to not reject the black Haitian heritage within the Dominican reality. He emphasizes the global racist system's impact on the existence of anti-haitianism on the island today. The Haitian-Dominican divide to him is weak at best and must be resolved to fully move beyond these racial tensions. What the global system ends up doing is not just negating black bodies but also black ways of knowing and the self. Whether black subjects are conscious of their own negation is not the main question of this project, but rather it serves to point to the ingrained nature of black oppression and denial that sits at a global level not just in localized tensions that constitutes a present traumatic reality that is not over.

This global imposition of blackness as being subordinated, or threatening, is a point highlighted in *Habeas Viscus* (2014), where Alexander Weheliye reworks Giorgio Agamben's "Homo sacer" when applied to people of color.[38] Weheliye views Man as a

[38] Alexander Weheliye exposes the limits of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* when it is applied to people of color around the world. He believes the slave plantations are the ultimate state of exception rather than the Nazi

socio-juridical assemblage where white men control the world order of subaltern subjects (in this case he includes blacks, women, members of the LGBT community among other oppressed bodies). He makes the case that the political system of Man imposes certain designations onto the body forcing it to have negative meanings and subjugates them depending on what symbols the body itself has. In this sense, black people are imprinted with a designation of inferiority, which makes them less than human based on certain political systems set out by Man. Agamben's framework assumes all people have the right to be part of the social fabric of society, but black subjects sit in a state of exception in that their bodies were always objectified with no social connection and they continue to experience a social death that does not let them live within the same social norms re-inscribing the fixed racial notions of identity, good or bad, on people of color. Belicia's body, her children, and the bodies of Yves, Tibon, Amabelle and the Haitians reveal the multiple layers of oppression and intersectional suffering they live. While *Oscar Wao* reveals the daily struggle of Dominican-Americans through explicit means, *The Farming of Bones* exposes the subtle, unfinished nature that lingers. In both cases black bodies become the site of memory in its complicatedly layered form. These layers highlight how the body is imprinted with a marker of inferiority and struggle, demonstrating how race is a social construct rather than an inherent biological reality. In the case of Haiti, the global political order has made them less than human from the onset of their 1804 revolution as well as the symbol of alterity Trujillo cemented during his thirty-year rule of the country.

concentration camps Agamben uses. With this, Weheliye goes on to make the distinction between the 'flesh' and the 'body' where one is akin to bare life and the other is constructed through a social order, he calls Man.

For Dominicans rejecting their blackness and being forced to contend with their black ancestry while in the US becomes a source of trauma out of their control.

Like the black female body shows the location of social order, as McKittrick points out, the black body generally sees this political imprint of subordination becoming ever-present through the brute force on various characters. While in Díaz's text we see how violence becomes a trope for Belicia Cabral's body and how it continues onto her children, in Danticat's text the violence is collectivized in such a way that moves beyond simply a gendered norm and becomes much more racial in nature. When the group traveling with Amabelle arrives to Dajabón they are met by a squad of young men who are set on killing those they define as Haitian based on their inability to pronounce *perejil* and because of their blackness. After defending his group from the menacing boys, Tibon is hit with the machete on the back, forever marking his body with the political brutality of Trujillo and enforcing the inferiority Man has set out. Amabelle describes the scene saying, "One of the other boys grabbed Yves' machete— Felices's machete, Doña Sabine and Don Gilbert's machete— and plunged it into Tibon's back. Tibon seemed startled by the intrusion of the cold metal into his back. It was as though he had been in the middle of a dream" (192). The scene is haunted with the music of *La Orquesta Presidente Trujillo* as a sinister reminder of the all-encompassing nature and the inescapability Trujillo has on the Haitian people of the island. What is unique about this scene is that it moves the trauma from the individual to the community with the machete of several of the Haitian compatriots into the back of Tibon by this Dominican boy linking the violent suffering of several people at once. This connection both creates certain culpability and a sense of guilt, but also links the two countries. Like the layers of violence seen on

Belicia, the scars persist on Amabelle never fulling reconciling the death of her parents, the massacre, or her life afterwards. When she returns to Alegría, the city in the Dominican Republic where she lived, her body becomes one confused with emotions. She is at once joyed, tired, scared, and aged recognizing the disconnect between her body and her emotions. The physical violence from the massacre has turned into an emotional vestige that she never puts to bed.

An orphan in the Dominican Republic, the death of her parents creates the unrooted nature that blacks in the Americas feel— another layer in their trauma. That they died drowning in a river, parallels the loss of culture, family, and dignity that stems from the middle passage. Throughout the text the reader is hit with violent images combined with pleasant familial scenes paralleling the physical hit the characters in her novel experience with the literary hit on the reader. For instance, Amabelle remembers her mother always smiling, telling Sebastien at one point, but then continues, "Except of course when she and my papa were drowning" (14). Like the cut on Yves' back, throughout the text we see the cut of these stark violent acts that hit the reader, an attempt to replicate the constantly unrooted emotional reality the characters live. These anecdotes of her family are intertwined with those of her longing for Sebastien, her lover that she loses to the massacre. As the novel progresses these "memories" become less frequent and the height of the trauma they all but cease to occur. It is not until the end of the novel that the recollections emerge in a much more pensive manner. An older Amabelle contemplates her life back in Haiti, never fully allowing herself to love again. Yves, the man that took her in along with his mother, becomes a reminder of her loss and she is not able to consummate their love. Sebastien becomes something more than an old, lost love,

but a stand in for all that she has lost. Her family, her history, her heart, all forfeited to the global systems that made them occur. Yet, her suffering sits in the present. In the final memory she states, "The past is more like flesh than air; our stories testimonials like the ones never heard but the justice of the space or the Generalissimo himself" (281).

The flesh of the past stays in the novel to the final scene, underscoring the present reality of her trauma. While on her way back home after her visit with Señora Valencia, Amabelle asks her driver to stop at the river her parents died crossing and where she nearly met her maker crossing back to Haiti. Amabelle lays in the river, nude and becomes one with the river. Both cleansing her of the trauma she carries and scaring the back as she laid on the rocks. She tries to find a peace but does not and when the professor returns, he sees her and walks away. Amabelle comments, "He, like me, was looking for the dawn." (310). That throughout the story Amabelle seeks a peace with herself is the testament to the desire to find a resolution that has given her so much pain. Her search for a dawn never comes, and quite frankly, points to a future that will likely never appear. The hope for the future is what remains and impacts the present, like the past. Amabelle's loss of family, home, and love would dictate that she's in an emotional despair, yet she strives on, like the Black Atlantic, forward.

In *Oscar Wao,* the un-resolvability emerges with the Trujillo regime perpetuated this racial silencing but also how the complicated racial dichotomy in the U.S. leads Dominicans to continue this muting of their experience and their race. The Dominican-Americans make up the fourth largest Latino group (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011) and face a unique cultural conflict when they arrive in the U.S. by being forced face the reality of their historical blackness: even when on the island, their African roots are silenced. The

plight of Dominican racial identity has been well documented.[39] Dominican-American scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant emphasizes that the Dominican population is one that resists its black ancestry while the country is overwhelmingly descendant from Africa (*The Dominican American*, 4-5). Díaz combines the racial situation of the United States and of the Dominican Republic to mold something uniquely Dominican-American that is impacted by Trujillo in the way they deal with American racial discourse, constituting another trauma in their long memorial continuum. The melding of experiences seen in Díaz's novel is an example of the broader complex reality that African diasporic subjects face in their layered oppression. On the one level, Dominican silencing and rejection of their blackness amounts to another trauma, a much more insidious one that negates their existence on an epistemological level. On another level, we see the material vestiges of the Trujillo regime, whose violence follows the pattern of other regional dictators. And on a third level, we see the US racial reality in these Dominican subjects, where the second-class status creates a malaise that persists through time. These are the layers of trauma in this specific story and with these specific subjects, but the parallels to other African diasporic subjects abound.

The brutality that Trujillo forces his people to endure and the violence that is seen on Belicia's body makes her the embodiment of this haunting because she rejects their blackness yet belongs to the blackness all in the same. The narrator presents Trujillo as a haunting by constantly mentioning subtle aspects about how he and his administration function in order to keep control. He writes, "…the fact that her long-gone parents had died when she was one, the whispers that Trujillo had done it, those first years of her life

[39] See Ginetta Calendario's *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (2007) and Silvio Torres-Siallant's *The Dominican-Americans* (1998)

when she'd been orphaned, the horrible scars from that time, her own despised black skin" (80). Belicia Cabral, like many characters in the novel, is constantly haunted from events and experiences that stems from the inability to resolve slavery combined with the constant presence of current and past traumas. For Belicia, the current trauma is the abuse on her body, the legacy of Trujillo and her transnational condition that does not allow her to solve Trujillo's aftermath.

This haunting does not end with her violence but continues like Amabelle's inability to find peace in how Belicia's body slowly declines because of cancer. Belicia's cancer never fully consumes but through its presence both transforms the family and devours her body. In the novel, Belicia's cancer and immune system become what Donna Haraway calls "a map drawn to draw recognition and misrecognition of self and other in the dialects of western biopolitics" (204). The immune system is a place that is used to relay a message and Haraway gives a plethora of science fiction examples about the body and how the immune system is used. Belicia's immune system, her cancer diagnosis and subsequent decline, is used as a remapping of the slow decay of the psyche of the Dominican people based on their repressive experience. The cancer that she experiences is a manifestation of this trauma that is experienced by its people, its layers, its continuation. When Belicia's daughter, Lola, runs away because she was unhappy with the violence and verbal abuse in the home, Oscar eventually tracks her down and Belicia tricks him in order to find her and bring her back home. Oscar and Lola meet at a coffee shop to talk and to exchange some goods that Oscar brought home when Belicia walks in and Lola screams, "Oscar! I screamed but it was too late. My mother already had me in her hands. She looked so thin and worn, almost like a hag, but she was holding on to me

like I was her last nickel, and underneath her red wig her green eyes were furious" (69). We see here the dual role that Belicia's body plays: both a strong powerful woman exerting violence towards her daughter, but at the same time its counter posed to the reality of her slow physical consumption. Haraway's "remapping" emerges as the cancer reflects the scar that Trujillo is to Belicia, forcing her to be in a constant state of exception where she is slow decline but not quite dead yet, never fulling belonging within the world order. The overarching bodily decline throughout the novel shows the toll on black subjects, bombarded constantly from imposed expectations, physical negations, abuses, and intergenerational traumas that are remapped on the black (female) body in these novels.

In the end, the body in both of these texts emphasizes how these traumas can take shape reflective of the assemblages that criticize a world order. Where the black female body in the first half of this chapter emphasized the layers of trauma and subjugation on Belicia Cabral, the black body also becomes the vessel for the lingering and multiple traumas that the body must endure. The body and the brutality it experiences shifts and moves with the location and subjectivity that is being imposed complicating how the trauma is understood (and articulated) for black subjects. To these Afro-Latinx and Afro-Caribbean authors, enunciations of what they see as their racial experience challenges the constructs of memory by questioning these fixed notions of representations that they seemingly cannot escape, articulating their reality, one that holds the legacy of their ancestors and the traumatic events that have since followed. By acknowledging the continuity of their oppressions these writers shed light on a truth that they are told does not exist, that they are forced to move past, and give voice to an historical experience that

is silenced. In the act of writing, and writing this Black Memory, they reshape their representation of themselves and their communities, ultimately decolonizing the power schema by inserting their interwoven reality of the past and present into the world order through this Nexus of Black Trauma.

Conclusion

Memory is a collective process; especially so, for the black subjects of the diaspora. Like many communities that have suffered traumas too harsh to tell, that linger with the individuals and the cultures that experienced them, memory in the black community is layered with the continuation of a white supremacist institutions that did not end with the abolition of slavery in the northern and southern continent. This structure continued in the United States well past 1865 and continues on the island of Hispaniola well after the first black republic was formed in 1804. As Hawlbach indicated back in the first part of the 20th century, memory is communal and individual combing the experiences of many to build a community experience. The linear nature that is usually associated with memory is broken by contemporary constructions that show how memory is more complex and multidirectional. Taking Rothberg's construction of the multidirectional nature of memory, this chapter has shown how for black subjects it is at once an articulation of the past and the present. However, for black subjects this multidirectional system means multi-experiential, carrying on their backs the trauma of slavery, the slave trade, and in the case of the characters in Danticat and Díaz's books, the Trujillo regime, transnational traumas, and bodily oppressions. With this, the lens of the kaleidoscope move to expose new realities within trauma that are either ignored or misunderstood by memory and trauma theorists, yet revealed by the unsaid in this Black

Memory. Memory is indeed passed on from generation to generation leaving vestiges on the cultural marks of the children of the subjects that experience the trauma, and for black subjects the experience of slavery continues in the reality of black subjects today beyond a metaphorical theoretical framework. New studies indicate that the neurological effects of trauma can be passed on up to three generations down effecting everything from cognitive development to economic gains. Both the collective and the intergenerational effects of trauma can be seen in the texts of Danticat and Díaz. Oscar de Leon and his family not just continue to see the vestiges of the Trujillo Regime once in the US, but continue to experience the trauma and the haunting of the slave trade. Amabelle and her family see the economic consequences of decades of economic subjugation that leads to death and destruction of lives both materially and physically. Both are negatively affected by Trujillo. The white supremacy that ultimately links them all demonstrates a uniquely Black Memory where the event does not end but continues in the power structures that black subjects must endure.

But a Black Memory as an unsaid exposes the intersectional oppressions that exist in conjunction to the historical traumas. Black subjects in the Atlantic world do not articulate only the trauma of the past that is the present, but also the traumatic experiences of a gendered, classist, political, and economic kind. Amabelle's lost love and family and her desire for some kind of personal peace that never arrives is a trauma that mirrors Belicia's rape, Oscar’s masculine impotence, and the family's overall poverty. These elements are traumas that sit side-by-side the past atrocities that are integral to being black in the Western World. This Black Memory then is defined by being intergenerational, collective, and intersectional in such a way that one cannot make

strict distinction between what was a gendered oppression and what was a racial trauma. These experiences sit simultaneously, defining the subjects and its community. Díaz and Danticat provide a case study of what this Black Memory is because of the historically global oppression, racial continuation, and transnational combination that makes the characters in their texts prototypes of the articulation of a uniquely Black Memory. Compared to Manzano's negotiations, the kaleidoscope remains the same but the memorial articulations shifts the unsaid by exposing another resistance to global oppression attempting to articulate a reality that has been obscured, refocusing the lens to reveal a new understanding. Their articulation of various traumas and oppression at once both exposes the particular nature of the Black Atlantic experience that is not stagnant but constantly striving to articulate the self and the collective so that all systems can be exposed, ultimately seeking to enunciate a truer version of the self, past and present.

In the final chapter, the kaleidoscope moves again focusing on the triumphant and defeating reality of minoritized subjectivity in the Atlantic world. The first chapter showed that evaluating Manzano and his work in totality provides a fuller understanding of the man, the artist and the system he resisted. The last chapter highlights the preset reality that, like the articulations of memory, are multifaceted and less pleasing than the traditionally one-dimensional expectations. The unsaid emerges through the black hair of Junior and Tomás, two characters they understanding the global oppression on their bodies and resist, reinscribe, win, and lose in a global reality. The unspoken resistance through their hair round out the kaliedescope unsaid by shifting one last time to put into focus the way black subjects straddle a line of slow gain and loss that unsettles Western norms of articulation.

Chapter III

The Duality in the Black Male Body

"Run a hand through your hair, like the white boys do, even though the only thing that runs easily through your hair is Africa."

—Junot Díaz, "Drown"

Introduction

"Yo quiero poder poner mi cabello como a mi me de la gana, como yo quiera, sin tener que tener ningún tipo de repercusión social y sin que ese aspecto que me estoy dando al cabello afecte cómo yo me siento por dentro como mujer negra o como ser humano" (Contreras). Dominican-American blogger and natural hair promoter Carolina Contreras began her blog in 2011 in order to promote the need for a celebration of "Afro curls" in the face of societal pressures that identified black hair as "bad." Her blog, and later her salon in the Dominican Republic, strive to uplift women who have been told too many times that their natural, curly, and black hair makes them look unkept, or in other words, it needs to be straightened. By styling her hair as she desires, Contreras along with many other women push against white beauty standards that are so ingrained in mixed race societies, where lines between racism, gender, and hygiene are merged to become indistinguishable. Thus, hair for black subjects, like voice and memory, is a concept that attempts to resist racial subjugation in such a way where the physical embodiment emerges as a site of protest, creating an articulation of the self, that like Manzano, forces a presence linked to external factors. Hair, in this chapter, becomes the connecting link that both oppresses and resists through unarticulated means.

The study of hair in the academy and in popular culture has exposed how the social expectations, which are predominantly white, force black women to undertake

unhealthy chemical procedures in order to straighten (or aesthetically whiten) their hair. Today the black hair care industry is a multi-billion dollar one in the US alone showing the economic impact of white beauty standards in black communities (Spellers and Moffitt 3). While these material promotions expose the inherent duality in hair for black subjects in that it both counts as a sign of oppression and site of economic resistance. Films like the *Barbershop* (2002), *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* (2005), Contreras' blog and more recently, Puerto Rican film *Angélica* (2017) show how hair for these groups fosters a sense of community as an agent for change vis-a-vis the negative onslaught from social beauty expectations.

While my first chapter focused on voice and agency in the writings of an enslaved person and my second chapter focused on the intersectional and historical trauma of black subjects from the Caribbean, this third chapter engages with the dual representation of hair for black men in Latin America. In all three cases the subjects studied expose an unsaid resistance and re-inscription based on imposed expectations and discourse. However, what has been less studied is the role that hair plays in the development, cementation, and oppression of ideas of masculinity and race in both the US and in Latin America. While some scholars point to the fact that masculinity is anything done by a man, a highly problematic assumption, others emphasize the broader social structure that imposes behaviors that are violent and misogynistic under the guise of masculinity (Gutmann, “Masculinities in Latin America”, 119). Therefore, race and masculinity in this chapter converge to expose how hair becomes a bodily unsaid for black men in Latin American societies. Using Colombian film *La Playa D.C.* (2012) and Venezuelan film *Pelo malo* (2013), I provide two case studies and two diametrically different examples on

how hair functions to both oppress and resist societal expectations on the two masculine bodies presented. On the one hand, *Pelo malo*'s Junior attempts desperately to straighten (or whiten) his hair to the disgust of his mother Marta. On the other hand, Tomás in *La Playa D.C.* turns hair into a way to escape the violence and poverty that haunts his existence. While one film shows how hair and race come together to oppress the young Junior, the other film exposes how hair can be a source of pride for black men. What we see in the end is an unstable tightrope men must balance when engaging with issues of masculinity and race through hair so as to follow the limiting societal expectations. To deviate too much from what is a "right" male can have detrimental consequences but getting it right can lead to a certain liberation. Junior and Tomás characters expose the patriarchal racist social constructions in Latin America that lead to the stifling of men, especially men of color. Thus, the unsaid in this chapter becomes a bodily (physical) one in the form of black men's hair. Unlike the actions of Manzano, and the haunting in Díaz and Danticat's texts, hair is contingent on the biological draw that dictates societal success and failure. But, like the haunting and actions, hair can be changed and sculpted to fit one's purpose to resist. This chapter rounds out the unsaid by showing how it is ontological, epistemological, *and* embodied leading to a multifaceted resistance to black subject's oppressions.

Mariana Rondon's 2013 film *Pelo Malo* follows Junior, a mixed-race young boy, who is spending his summer contemplating how to straighten his hair for his new school identification card. His mother Marta recently lost her job as a security guard and attempts to balance the life of single-mother and the need to find a new job to feed her two sons. As the summer progresses and Junior attempts several methods to straighten his

hair and his mother's inability to find work, tensions between mother and son begin to emerge. Junior's hair becomes a source of conflict since his efforts to straighten his hair like the boy in the photo (a picture that has a young white boy with straight hair that Junior wants to emulate) puts into question his sexuality and masculinity to his mother who is concerned her son might be gay. In a moment of desperation, Marta asks Carmen, Junior's paternal grandmother, to take care of Junior and his younger brother while she returns to her former employer to plead for her former job. Carmen supports Junior's desire to straighten his hair and become a singer, like the white boy in the photo, which she sees as early signs that he might be gay too. She helps him straighten his hair and trains him to perform like a "true" singer to the objection of Marta who blames Carmen for her son's behavior. In the background of the film Hugo Chavez's cancer diagnosis and economic reforms form part of a broader national conversation about patriotism and masculinity that serves to inform Venezuelan expectations on gender. In several occasions, Marta attempts to show Junior how a man should behave by having sex with her former boss. She ultimately regains her job, buys hair clippers, and gives Junior an ultimatum: cut your hair or go live with your grandmother. Defeated, Junior tells his mother he does not love her and begins to buzz off his hair in silence. In the end, a boy who spent most of the film singing and looking for his mother's love, ends up beginning the school year in silence as the rest of his classmates sing the Venezuelan national anthem.

Similarly, *La playa D.C.* (2012) directed by Juan Andrés Arango García tackles issues of race, masculinity and hair but in a way that does not necessarily oppress Tomás, the films central character. Arango García's film follows a young man as he navigates the

streets of Bogotá after him and his family were displaced by violence in the Chocó region of the country. Tomás works at a factory loading and unloading goods in order to make ends meet for his family. His older brother Chaco recently deported from the US and knowledgeable about the latest in black men hairstyles has a desire to go back to the states. Then, there is Jairo, the youngest of the three, who is involved with the drug cartels of the city and also an addict that Tomás tries to take care of as the movie progresses. Their mother who has a relationship with a white man plays a secondary and submissive role in the film focusing on her youngest child who remains nameless. Tomás is trying to hold his life and that of his family, especially Jairo's, together while also navigating the realities of being an adolescent. He looks for love, tries to find a purpose, and is loyal to his family almost to his own detriment. Chaco introduces Tomás to some old friends who help him train in creating intricate designs in men's hair. This turns into a passion for Tomás, who is looking to leave an unsatisfying job and find a profession in a place that has not allowed him to succeed. Unlike Junior who suffers from social expectations that both rejects his black body and forces him to cut his hair, Tomás finds purpose and liberation in his black hair. Hair for Tomás turns into an out and a source of pride both of masculine expectations and economic and existential progress in a way that pushes against societal expectations. Violence in the film then becomes a secondary element, almost always present but never directed onto Tomás and his body. The final scene where he begins his own business on the streets shows how his hair becomes a source of liberation for this young man. Ultimately, both films expose the duality in black bodies and black hair that serves as both a site of oppression and a (possible) site of liberation for Junior and Tomás. Subsequently, I will examine how race forces these two

young males to contemplate their existence in face of a society that neither wholly accepts them and actively attempts to suppress their existence.

While race in Latin America and the Caribbean has been defined by different shades of *mestizaje*, the characters in the film push against the exhausting social expectations to very different ends. Race is not the only means by which the society oppresses these characters, but ideas of masculinity prove to be a way that the Latin American society writ-large imposes expectations that are too rigid for the lived reality of these characters. While Junior attempts to explore his place in the society coupled with his lack of a father figure, the society, specifically his mother, come down on him hard, choking his exploration to the point that he is silenced. Tomás balances these ideas in much more subtle ways, priding himself on his love and affection for his family while still attempting to exert his own masculinity on others. In both instances, masculinity, and masculinity for a black young man, become focal points that disrupt societally imposed ideas of masculine toughness. As bell hooks notes in her work *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992), black representations are often seen as being good or bad and what is deemed good is in opposition to the stereotypically bad that is not necessarily true (5). Thus, the subjects not only resist the representations that are deemed good by society as a whole by adding a kaleidoscopic view that constantly negotiates resistance and re-inscription. Along this dual vein, hair becomes a source of both pride and tension. Tomás reveals hair as a bodily reality that can lead to economic gain and independence with the end goal to leave his impoverished reality. For Tomás hair is not the "bad hair" of Junior, but rather an embodied resistance that allows him to be an active agent in decolonizing his reality. Junior is less fortunate, for him, hair becomes a site of constant oppression

that leads to his silencing. In the end he receives the message clearly: shut up or get out. Finally, both films are against economic backdrops that create a malaise in both young men's existences. Neither the indoor (feminine) spaces are free from harassment, nor the violent outdoor (masculine) spaces are safe. Indirect violence whether it be verbal, physical, or economic are a constant in both films highlighting the everyday lived precarity of black men. In the end, both films reveal the duality in masculine and racialized expectations that are not completed but are shifting and become an embodied resistance of the unsaid.

Gazes of the Black Male Bodies.

For both films, race becomes both a central and secondary element that emphasizes the bodily experience of the characters. While Junior is clearly a mixed-race child living in the urban setting of Caracas, Tomás is squarely placed in the Afro-Colombian context of his respective country. The Afro-Colombian experience is one that is filled with silences and voids that continues a global reality of black negation. Like many other parts of Latin America racial intermixing occurred in the country since colonial times blurring racial stratifications (Telles 83). Yet as Edward Telles notes, "Nevertheless, as casual observers have noted, physical traits such as skin color and hair texture continued to be markers of stratification" (83). With these stratification the rest of the hemisphere saw an abundance of black intellectual collaboration in the first half of the 20th century, primarily in the 1920's and 1930's. With movements like the Harlem Renaissance in the US, *negritude* in the francophone Caribbean, *negrismo* is the Hispanic Caribbean, along with Afro-centric political movements in Brazil togther comprise a regional consciousness that defines black intellectualism in the region.

However, in Colombia afro political movements and intellectual enlightenment do not begin to emerge until the 1970's and 1980's with the research of anthropologist Nina Freidenmann de Sánchez and her notion of *huellas de africania* that begin to cipher through the African diasporic experience in Colombia (Wade, "Definiendo la negridad en Colombia" 24-6). Her research begins to unravel a rich history that had traditionally been negated.[40] This consciousness culminates with the reforms done in the 1991 constitution that give Afro-Colombian populations a legal (and constitutional) rights similar to the indigenous populations of the country. These rights allow Afro-descendant populations political, economic, and representative rights with the aim to gain equality in the country. With this *de jure* progression, *de facto* oppressions remain. Thus, a country that has defined itself, like many Latin American countries, with notions of *mestizaje* that privileges indigenous and white notions of the national construction, black bodies are ignored or negated. [41] With the 1991 Constitution, Colombia nationally was forced to grapple with a part of its cultural construction that was for a time not in the national discourse. While this legal recognition meant, albeit initially, economic and political progress, problems abound for Afro-descendant people in the country such as the continued absence in national debates, poor access to economic mobility tools, and a continued negation from national discourses (Wade, "Afro-Colombian Social Movements" 145). These racial negations are also in Venezuela where a similar racial

[40] Problems with Friedemann's notions of "vestiges" of African culture and criticisms of her assessment have been delved into in other scholarship (See Peter Wade's "Definiendo le negridad en Colombia"), however her role in the emergence of a national dialogue remains instrumental in the progress of black rights in the 1991 constitution.

[41] Traditionally speaking, Latin America racial constructs have been defined by different interpretation of *mestizaje* loosely defined as a mixture of races within national psyches (See chapter 2 for a more detailed trajectory of race in Latin America). While each country has its own definition of mestizaje for its specific national, political, and historical reality, Colombia and Venezuela share a common focus on white and native subjects with Afro-descendants being secondary if not completely negated.

rhetoric in the country and similar racial history as Colombia. Like many Latin American countries, Venezuela defines its racial national make up as one of mestizaje. Similarly, Venezuelan racial rhetoric has muted the African descendant in the country deciding to define the nation as tricolor rather than uniquely whitened. With this rhetoric, realities persist, and the country is heavily dependent on a racial democracy rhetoric that still privileges whites and divisions are seen as being based on class not race (Wright 5).

This exclusionary racial background is where Tomás finds himself in the capital city of Bogotá where his family relocated after violence in the area of the Chocó where most afro-descendant Colombians reside. His body, and that of his brothers, constantly face their existence that confronts a national discourse that either threatens them or constantly ignores them. Now, this is not unique to the black experience in Colombia, but also to many black male bodies in the Americas overall. Black men are generally categorized as being sexually and morally deviant compared to usually white societal constructs of morality and sexuality. For one, you have a hyper-sexualization that generally poses a threat to women, usually white women a point underscored by Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Patricia Hill Collins affirms that these expectations of sexualization and heteronormativity stem from white hegemonic cultural expectations that both define these terms for both black men and women as to oppress (87). While on the other hand you have black men as inferior or a physical threat to society at large (Hill Collins 149).

In his book *The Man-Not: Race Class, Genre and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (2017) Tommy Curry discusses how black men have been constantly either negated through the focus on mass incarceration and its effects since their removal from

society places them in a constant abject state. To Curry, the narrative around incarceration negates the black man's existence through statistical exclusions but also categorizes them as threatening to the society leading to an existential loss for black men. (Curry 33-4). Yet, neither film portrays these black bodies as a threat or overly sexualized, but rather shows the human side of their experience while underscoring how society still imposes violent and sexual ideals on their bodies. *La playa D.C.* shows the racialized and classed reality of these two young men but breaks with the predominantly negative stereotypes while also having them exposes a dual bodily role of both resistance and re-inscription. Tomás, and his brothers, constantly face this rejection from society from several fronts. His mother's partner—it is not clear exactly what kind of romantic relationship the two have other than they have a child together—rejects Tomás' younger brother due to his drug use and Tomás leaves the home in order to be with him. In a scene that seems a bit forced at times, Tomás exerts his masculinity by telling the old white man that the house they reside in is not his and attempts a sort of "I am the man of the house" chest pump, but ultimately leaves defeated and frustrated with the system. In another scene, Chaco, the older brother, and Tomás are harassed by two *mulato* and one black guards at a local mall, and societal expectations about how black men must behave abound throughout the film. Stylistically, both Chaco and Tomás stand out in the mall with their urban street attire but also because of their physical black bodies against the bright lights and white polished marble of mall structure and the predominantly white patrons of the mall that are scene in the background. After running away from the guards Chaco is visibly upset and Tomás states, "I can't believe those guys. They are that way because they're being paid to be watch dogs…" Chaco gets angry at Tomás and replies,

"All these years that you have been living here you don't know that the dogs in this place are us." Tomás replies by asking him why he is angry and Chaco says that he never wants to be brought back to a place like the mall to be humiliated like that again and they both storm off. Chaco, unlike Tomás, is brutally aware of his racial and masculinist construct that excludes him from certain places and locations as to be rejected from society.

Chaco has internalized the inferiority imposed on him by the larger society a notion Franz Fanon discusses in his text *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) where he states, "At the age of twenty… the Antillean recognized himself as a Negro, but, by virtue of an ethical transit, he also feels (collective unconsciousness) that one is a Negro to the degree which one is wicked, sloppy, malicious, instinctual" (192). Chaco and Tomás' have defined their blackness (or how they are a Negro) by the negative societal expectations they encountered in the mall that demonstrates a more insidious reality where they re-inscribe internally the false ideas Colombia has of them. The body is inherently the site of meanings that must navigate both one's own conception, but also the societal expectations that are placed on it in a material way. For Chaco, and now Tomás, their bodily markings are made clear if they were not previously: they are not welcomed in white parts of society. Colombia poses a unique spot in the national discussions of race in that the absence of a black discourse across the country is in itself a sort of negation. While some countries have sanitized the African descendants and others have whitewashed them through incorporations of indigeneity, Colombia simply omitted the discussion all together. By not having this discussion the final product is an idea of blackness that is not fully recognized and by extension makes the subjects like Chaco and Tomás as inhuman and not belonging. Thus, in the scene in the mall their presence in the

mall disrupts notions of belonging by their physical bodies in those locations. Moreover, their reality is constantly present and they are ultimately removed from the location by force. Black bodies thus face the dual resistance and acceptance of both re-inscribing what they know to be false— that they are inferior— while also negotiating a resistance in order to survive. In not portraying these young men in a Hollywood-type of inner-city youth stereotype but also not shying away from portraying a reality in an echoes way, the film highlights the more nuanced reality black men face where they are not hypersexualized or overly violence in essence, but rather how society constructs these images and boxes them into fixed constructs.

Those socially constructed societal interactions are similar for Junior, where again, we see how his body is also a site of resistance in an urban setting but one that is complicated by issues of masculinity, not just race. In the film Juniors surroundings are predominantly feminine; places—his mother's house, his grandmother's house, his best friend's flat—are all locations that are feminine. Additionally, all of the females are lighter skin/whiter than he is except his grandmother who is clearly of Afro-Venezuelan descent. His body takes on a dual physical exclusion and questioning since he never quite belongs for being both darker and masculine. In various points throughout the film these feminine spaces are hostile to Junior constantly making him question his sense of place. For instance, when Marta goes back to her former employer in order to attempt to get her job back, Marta leaves him with his friend's mother to be watched. In the friend's apartment he is deemed too loud and is eventually sent away so that his friend's mom could continue with her weight loss therapy group. Throughout the film Junior's mother, Marta pushes him away in her home whether it be physically or verbally. His

grandmother wants him to be something he may or may not so he can move in with her, another source of tension that ultimately has Junior running away from her home in a fit of anger. Then, Junior's masculine body becomes a place of rejection in the mostly feminine space that he strives to belong. Subliminally Junior gets the message: his body should not be in that place. Gender, and in this case masculinity, is socially constituted and as Judith Butler notes it is not created based on the natural essence of the body itself but rather linguistic representations that define gender performances where bodies mimic the ways in which they are *told* to behave based on social constructions (6). Junior fails to perform based on the societal expectations because he does not mimic the strict definitions of masculinity through his desire to straighten his hair or his fawning over the older teen boy. These actions make his mother and grandmother read his behavior as not masculine maintaining and imposing the oppressive social constructs on the young boy.

However, those feminine spaces are not the only places where Junior's body becomes stigmatized. In various scenes throughout the movie his young body becomes othered based on the socially constructed behavior he fails to mimic. The social control of Junior's body comes in several ways throughout the film, specifically through the stares which mirror the societal gaze on his body. Marta, Junior, and Carmen all have powerful stares that battle racial, sexual, and power relations between the various characters. Marta imposes her views and chastises her son with her looks of disgust, disapproval, or confusion with his behavior. For instance, we he sings quietly to himself on the bus, when he falls over onto a man and she assumes he was trying to grope the older man, when he is dancing in what she considers feminine way, Marta's stares are not too far away telling Junior that he is not performing correctly. The stares become a

micro-behaviors representative of the patriarchal expectations imposed on subjects by society at-large. Marta never explicitly states that Junior is behaving or acting incorrectly, but Junior repeatedly gets the message. This patriarchal gaze also works to affirm gendered expectations. In one scene, Marta invites her former boss to dinner in order to get her old job back and she ends up sleeping with the man. As they begin to make love, Junior watches his mother and the two lock eyes with each other throughout the entire sex act. When the former boss finally reaches climax is when Marta eventually looks away affirming to Junior how a man should behave, or in this case, perform. The stares in this scene become imbalanced where Marta clearly has the upper hand in messaging with close up shots of her while she is being penetrated and close up shots of Junior observing, or reading, the act. These negative stares are mirror opposite to loving and affectionate scenes with his younger, and whiter, baby brother that Marta constantly coddles, kisses, sings to, and lovingly admires in various scenes throughout the film. The baby is read as "right" to Marta because of his whiteness, while Junior understands that his behavior is being read as "wrong" by his mother.

But, just as the gaze is a place to oppress Junior or impose a certain masculine expectation, it is also a place where he resists. bell hooks notes that staring has long been a mechanism for resistance in the African diaspora stating, "The gaze has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that "looks" to document one that is oppositional" (116). Junior's gaze is in opposition to the lack of love that he receives from his mother and her imposition of masculine expectations. Junior constantly seeks his mother's love and approval by staring at her as if to say "love me too." In one scene,

both mother and son are on the couch while Marta is watching television Junior is just staring at her and she says, “Don’t look at me like that. You know I don’t like it when you look at me like that.” Junior eventually breaks and asks, “Did my dad love you? And me? And the baby?” Marta replies by smiling and saying yes he did. To which Junior then asks, “And granny?” and both start to laugh. Throughout the entire scene Junior is staring at his mother in what becomes an act of defiance and a test to see is she loves him. After the two laugh, Junior, attempting to be sweet towards his mother, puts a pin in her and she gets angry, asking him where he obtained the hair clip. She yells at him to return it and pushes him away by telling him to go to the other side of the couch. The gaze is emphasized by the elongated shot of the camera where both Marta and Junior are equally positioned in the frame while sitting on the couch giving the viewer a sense that they are combatting. Carmen also has a similar staring match with her ex daughter-in-law as a way to assert her own expectations on what she believes to be Junior’s sexual orientation. However, for Carmen, the power dynamic is in her favor and she stares at Marta to show she has the upper hand as she tells Marta that she thinks her son is gay and that he should live with her to help the mother with the finances. Marta, true to form, stares back attempting to assert her mothering. This scene goes between equalizing parallel shots and close-ups that focus on the face emphasizing the mothering and racialized dance that these two women engage in. These piercing stares in the film become at once sites of resistance and oppression and Marta’s gaze specifically are the social expectations placed on the child.

It is not just Junior’s behavior that puts his mother on alert as he fails to perform like a man, but rather how Junior has internalized these behaviors he does not fully

understand yet unknowingly performs that is problematic. Gwen Begner argues that race and gender are constructed from the same symbolic order that occur simultaneously where subjects then "negotiate, resist, and internalize these ideological groupings" (xiv).[42] For instance, while visiting a medical office Junior asks the doctor if he has a tail, presumably from his mother telling him he has a "colita" or a way of saying he's behaving femininely. Sitting shirtless on the examining table, the doctor examines his spine, looks in the back of his pants, and taps Junior on the back saying that he is fine. Marta comes back days later asking the doctor explicitly if her son could be "marica" a derogatory term for homosexuals in many Latin American countries. The pathologizing terminology for homosexual men is not new (Chon-Suk Han, "No bareback for black men") an especially so for gay men of color who see the dual oppression both in a predominantly white gay world and in their communities of color (Chon-Suk Han, "They Don't Want to Cruise Your Type"). However, the mother, nor the grandmother, and likely Junior too, know if he is gay. Mariana Rondón in a 2013 interview states, "I am not hanging out a deliberation on his sexual identity. I am only presenting a portrait" (Rondón, *Indiewire*). The portrait Rondón ends up creating is of a young boy struggling to negotiate the societal expectations that he does not understand.

Whether or not Junior is gay is not the main question being asked in this chapter, but rather how do men navigate a patriarchal system that prescribes certain behaviors to men, especially black men? Tommy Curry again criticizes notions of masculinity for

[42] Begner's text *Taboo Subjects: Race, Sex, and Psychoanalysis* (2005) heavily criticizes the lack of racial disource in psychoanalysis studies. Begner weaves together psychoanalysis theory with racial discourse to produce a gendered and racial assessment of sex in several African-American and African diasporic texts. While useful, I limit myself to just her construction of this formation since the psychoanalytic theme of her texts is outside of the scope of this chapter.

black men as problematic because they are linked to *white* notions of masculinity. The closer a black man becomes to the white societal definitions of manhood, the more of a man, in the eyes of society he becomes (Curry, 10-11). Fanon similarly criticizes the desire black men have to be like white men because of their power over others, specifically women, to construct a society for the benefit of a privileged few. But even when these men, like Junior, attempt to structure their behavior around societal expectations they are not allowed because they have been branded as feminine, therefore weak. For Junior, when he seeks out a male approval in the case of the older boy who owns the shop, he is automatically rejected by his mother because she assumes he is gay. Junior is in what Susan Bordo calls a "double bind of masculinity" where when he tries to solve his socially labeled gendered behaviors he fails because he is then read as feminine[43]. Combine that with his darker skin and Junior simply cannot escape the patriarchal and white system that oppresses him. The problem that both young men face is that they are not given the option of how to be men that stems from the community itself. For black men and boys, like Junior and Tomás, these ideas are engrained in such a way that they either reproduce (as in the case of Tomás and his brothers) or are oppressed by alternative explorations of manhood (as in the case of Junior) while simultaneously resisting these efforts (as in the case of both young men).

Spaces that Oppress. Spaces that Liberate.

[43] Susan Bordo explains the idea of a double bind masculinity within societal expectations on dating and sexuality where men are expected to be the aggressor (or the pursuer) and females are supposed to be the passive ones (or the flirters). According to Bordo, the problem with this system is that it places men a system where they are not allowed to effectively exert their own version of masculinity within society (*The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*, 1999).

Social spaces are places where manhood becomes contested and re-inscribed in each film. Both films show the duality in the way society imposes its violent, gendered, and racialized expectations on these black young bodies. However, consistently both young boys show how they resist and negotiate these ideas that subjugate them to both survive their reality and acquire an agency of their own making with starkly different results. Spaces become locations where both young boys find a sense of calm and peace while also experiencing the threat to their bodies. Junior finds this in the bathroom scenes that are sprinkled throughout the movie as he attempts to straighten his hair, while Tomás sees this through the space of the barbershop. In both instances these spaces expose a perilous reality that forces the two young boys to cope. While Tomás shows a resilience to continue moving forward against an urban setting and family dynamic that stifle his personal growth and ultimately succeeds, Junior is not so lucky. Although Junior is younger than Tomás the film explores a similar racial, classed, and masculine expectations that lead to the young boy's silence. Tomás finds strength, hope, and a future in his black hair. Junior finds oppression, failed expectations, and continued societal oppression in his hair. Together, both films show the kaleidoscopic nature that is the black body and black hair neither completely oppressive nor completely liberating, underscoring the black reality of the 21st century.

For Tomás, the interior space of his mother's house becomes a place of hostility as well, but not for its femininity, but rather, for its whiteness. Tomás is forced to the streets a place that exhibits the haunting nature of violence in the Colombian psyche while also proving to be a place where he feels at home.[44] Unlike other contemporary

[44] Touching and physical violence being a defining component of masculinity is part of many studies (See C.J. Pascoe's "Compulsive Heterosexuality: Masculinity and Dominance" in *The Politics of Women's*

depictions of extreme violence such as the Netflix series *Narcos* (2015-present) or the 2000 film *Our Lady of the Assassins* based on the novel by Fernando Vallejo, the violence in the film is more of an echo than central stage. Like other depictions of violence in this context, Tomás and his family suffer was is called a "third violence" where the vestiges from *la Violencia* displaced the family to an urban setting, in this film's case, Bogotá; this displacement a form of violence that is incorporated into the national consciousness and seen in other films from Colombia (Kintaris 112-114). However, this film does not depict violence in a direct way but rather a violence that surrounds Tomás and his brothers constantly.[45] Tomás and his family are clearly affected by Kintaris' notion of "third violence"; however the violence they see is one linked to expectations of masculinity and globalizing reality of the urban setting of Bogotá. Yet, who exactly this violence affects is an important question to be explored along with how the violence affects different bodies in different contexts. The urbanization of violence reflects more how the elites worry of mass-urbanization than it does of the reality of violence that people of color face in Colombia's cities (O'Bryen 135). Human rights

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Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior by Rose Weitz) that undergird power relations between men and women within society and in private spaces. Pascoe states, "The flirtatious physical interactions escalated, becoming increasingly violent, until a girl squealed, cried, or just gave up. This sort of daily drama physically engendered meanings of power in which boys were confirmed as powerful and girls were weak" (323). Although an important area of research, violence in these films is not explicitly male to female violence and stems from broader historical events or interpersonal engagements that move away from a gender specific act of violence.

[45] Violence is a trope in many Colombian cultural productions that stem from the assassination of former leftist presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán which led to the emergence of contemporary notions of violence in the country, both political and social (Suarez). First, the assassination of Gaitán marks a shift in Colombia because it led to a series of other violent events in the country such as the eventual formation for the FARC which produced contemporary kidnappings, domestic terrorism, and a war that only ended legally in 2016 (Suraez 88). Furthermore, Rory O'Bryen argues that the cinema industry in Colombia has been complicit in cementing notions of violence in the country while at the same time contesting a hegemonic violence in an urban placement (181-2). Additionally, the violent reality in Colombia also led to a de-socialization where children were no longer allowed to play in the streets and adults would rarely step away from their homes for fear of being victims of violence (O'Bryen 10).

studies show that both indigenous and Afro-Colombians are disproportionally impacted by the violence both economically and socially that underscores how violence in the country is not equal (Norwegian Refugee Council 2017).

The urban streets in the film become a dual space of both social violence and peace for both young men. For one, Chaco, the older brother, comes back to the Colombian capital city from the US sporting the latest hairstyle trends from the States. They underscore the international influences of cultural productions in Colombian cinema that constantly compete with Hollywood portrayals and influence in the country (O'Bryen 181). Drug violence, gangs, urban, and certain comedy tropes define Hollywood's narratives of African-American characters because storylines produce the mega dollars (White Ndounou 201-13). These depictions hurt the societal representation of Black men because they negate their true stories of survival (213-21). The film follows some of these conventions but also breaks them in favor of showing how black men ultimately invert these expectations. Throughout the film, Jairo's life is threatened because of his links with drug gangs in Bogotá and Tomás constantly tries to protect his younger brother. Tomás desperately attempts to protect him even when Jairo disappears to get his drug fix and attempts to escape with him in order to shield him from both the drugs and the drug gangs seeking their money. At times, Tomás is verbally and physically violent to Jairo, both because of his desperation to save him and to exert his power over the younger boy. Tomás is ultimately unsuccessful and Jairo dies, presumably from drugs although the true cause of death remains unclear. The violence towards Jairo does stem from love and a desire to keep him safe, but also reaffirms societal ideas of what masculinity is for black men. While normally pinned to white hegemonic notions of

masculinity, society imposes a sexual and violent expectation on black males that leads to an inhuman treatment within society (Curry 27). Tomás reinforces these ideas of masculinity in various parts of the film, but especially with his relationship to Jairo. Violence transforms from the traditionally primary place in urban setting to something much more nuanced and ambiguous in the family and especially for Tomás. While the urban streets become a safe place to the antagonism he faces at home, he is ultimately the safest when he is alone in the woods where he retreats multiple times throughout the film to relax and find peace. The film depicts a vulnerable Tomás in these spaces and gentle young man, one less hardened from the "third violence" of the urban streets. The moments of vulnerability help break the Hollywood expectation of "gangsta" reality by both moving away from the protagonist being pulled into drug and urban street war and provide viewers with a more nuanced portrayal of black men in urban Colombia.

Thus, *La Playa D.C.* moves away from violence being a defining element in Tomás' character but reveals an intimacy, kindness, and vulnerability with various characters in the film that emerge to break ideas of black masculinity. Tomás slowly courts a girl whose father owns a hair salon and who sports braids throughout the film. Their relationship is short and proves to be a minor plot in the film, but serves to show a gentler adolescent, one who is navigating the troubles of growing up and becoming a man. But this is not the only time we see Tomás' kindness, even when he is violent to Jairo he cares for him and multiple scenes we see them hug and play and laugh creating a childlike quality to Tomás tall lanky teen build. Chaco is also a pseudo-father figure to Tomás and he looks up to him, following him around as they try to make money to go "back north." Just like how Junior finds a certain peace in the masculine space of the

corner store and the young teen boy, Tomás finds a certain peace and intimacy in the masculine setting of the barbershop where he trains to cut black men's hair. Using his artistic designs for hair and cultivating a friendship with the two other young men named Nelson and Danny who show him how to cut hair. Their small barbershop, inside a mall that is predominantly African descendent compared to the predominantly white shoppers in the mall where they were harassed, cultivates an urban space that shelters Tomás from his reality. Barbershops have long been places for black men in the African-American community to find a sense of belonging, resistance, and agency making it one of the few places they have been able to foster a positive space (Mill 9-10). Even at an international level, barber shops have been places where black men congregate and build a safe space.[46] For Tomás this barbershop taps into his artistic desire and his goal of finding peace in an environment that neither allows him to do it nor wants him to achieve it. Yet, Tomás resist and in the final scene we see that he has moved away from Bogotá with his half of the money he had been collecting with Chaco allowing him to set up a chair right on the street and takes his first patron as an independent man, freed from the restraints of his past and attempting to make his own way following a bildungsroman like ending where he no longer needs a guide. Once again, the streets prove to be a site where he is protected in an urban environment that are not always hospitable to young black men.

Indoor spaces are a place of oppression for Junior that are perpetually precarious, always being threatened by the invasion from a woman in his bathroom refuge. *Pelo malo* opens the movie with Junior taking off his clothes, except for his underwear, as he goes into the bathtub in the house his mother is cleaning. The owner of the house

[46] See Brad Weiss *Street Dreams and Hip Hop Barbershops: Global Fantasy in Urban Tanzania* (2009)

eventually comes home to find Junior soaking in the tub partially naked to her displeasure, a point Marta takes out on Junior once they leave the house. The interior feminine space becomes hostile to Junior not because the individual women do not want him or are displeased by him but by the vestiges of societal expectations that impose a certain view on him. The external space, and in both films the urban exterior space, becomes spaces that are filled with problems for both males. On the one hand, for Junior, the exterior space of his apartment block is where an older (whiter) boy owns a small shop that sells candies, household goods, and other trinkets. Junior constantly looks out of his window, watches the young boy play basketball, or just sits with him in various occasions as a safe place. In the *Indiewire* interview, the interviewer, Vanessa Martinez questions if the looks Junior gives the boy are attributed to a sexual desire. Rondón pushes back explaining how his gaze more nuanced than simply his sexual desire but that she tries to show how Carmen and Marta's assumption that he is gay demonstrates that "there is chauvinism and sexism in our society." Whether Junior's looks towards the teenage boy is a sexual desire is not the main question, but rather how the exterior masculine space reaffirms societal expectations come in plain view. The space is a site where Junior is allowed to be "free", albeit in a restricted manner. His freedom in these spaces is confined by societal ideas of where men should be and how they should behave. However, Marta and Carmen's point of view limit and impose on Junior desires that he may or may not have. Junior constantly goes to the little shop to get matches both for his mother when she asks for them and to see the teen boy in several occasions to feel safe. His grandmother Carmen uses the fact that Junior always has matches as proof that he is infatuated with the young teen and says, "eso es algo que no se quita" referring to

Junior's sexual desire. Marta, when she suspects that Junior is gay and after Carmen's comments forbids Junior from going to the shop as to limit his societally imposed sexual expectations.

Hair Transformation (and Failure)

While within these places they find both safety and precarity, they show how hair also falls within this duality. Hair for Tomás is an intimate scriptive thing which Robin Bernstein defines as "an item of material culture that prompts meaningful bodily behavior" that "reveals a script for a performance" (71-2). Like the body, hair also has societal expectations and is read in such a way that is both celebrated and a marker of Otherness that incites certain emotions among those that do not have the same black hair. In Tomás' case, he is in a community where his hair is celebrated in a way, or at least no demonized or exoticized in order to continue the oppression faced by the construction of mestizaje that defines Colombian racial attitudes. In various occasions of the film, hair is representative of the intimacy between brotherly and familial relations. In one of the more aesthetically pleasing scenes from the film, Tomás is in the forest, a place he finds peaceful, sleeping after fighting with Jairo and not wanting to return home where his mother's partner is still present. In what can be assumed to be a dream or memory, Tomás sits under the rain as his mother braids a young boy's hair as she tells him the meaning of the braids, stating "These braids are like a map that have to be taken care of. It showed men how they can find their way back. How to avoid any dangers so the men could find their way back." The young boy and the mother are wearing light-colored clothing as Tomás observes the braiding in almost a ritualistic scene with a soft singing

and falling rain as the background sound. The scene emphasizes Tomás predicament by focusing on his body while also angling him to side and blurring the image of his mother and the young boy in that background that is still centered on the screen (see Appendix, Figure 1). This hazy view parallels Tomás unclear path forward centering his subjectivity. The whole scene is quite soothing and underscores the importance of hair not just for the main character in the film but echoes a collective notion of intimacy within the black diasporic experience.

bell hooks comments how hair is the site for tension and intimacy for black women stating,

> For each of us, getting our hair pressed is an important ritual. It is not a sign of our longing to be white. It is not a sign of our quest to be beautiful. We are girls. It is a sign of our desire to be women. It is a gesture that says we are approaching womanhood. It is a rite of passage. Before we reach the appropriate age we wear braids and plaits that are symbols of our innocence, our youth, our childhood. Then we are comforted by the parting hands that comb and braid, comforted by the intimacy and bliss. There is a deeper intimacy in the kitchen on Saturday when hair is pressed, when fish is fried, when sodas are passed around, when soul music drifts over the talk. We are women together. (382)

hooks notes that this place and "ritual" was a uniquely woman place that served to build bonds among the women present and comments on the subtle communications that go on while the hair is being braided. While not a strictly a female space, the braids in the film play a central role in the development of Tomás where he starts the film with braids,

presumably made by his mother, and ends the film with a buzzed head. As it is for hooks, braids become a ritualistic phenomenon where Tomás is able to connect with his culture and finds a peace with the direction of his life through the black culture itself. As Tomás evolves as a person, so does his hairstyle, used to practice the techniques being used to start his career and remove himself from his location. For black women, the kitchen is the intimate space, but for Tomás he enters in and out of the indoor space of the barbershop where he trains and the outside urban space where he conquers at the end of the film. Hair, like it is for hooks, gives Tomás a sense of belonging not tied to the white hegemonic norms of the Colombian urban sprawl but one that is intimately tied to his blackness. Like the duality of his body and his hair, Tomás negotiates these societal definitions for his own benefit rather than falling victim to singular definitions of where he should be, how he should act, and how he should appear.

While Tomás celebrates the various locations willingly he enters and leaves within his urban space, Junior can see how space becomes oppressive. Feminine spaces indicate to Junior that he does not belong, but at the same time his hair modifications are done in constrained spaces. One of the first scenes in the film where Junior is in the bathtub in the house his mother is cleaning shows Junior partially nude and relaxing in the tub. In the scene, as he submerges his hair underwater it flows along with the movement of the water not being limited by the curls. With the camera shot focused on his shows a young boy who is being freed as his hair is loosened by the water. The peaceful image is then disrupted by the owner of the house, a whiter woman, questioning why there is a boy in her tub. The bathroom space becomes the place that provides Junior a precarious level of safety that is always disturbed by an older female. In another scene,

after watching an online video of instructions on how to straighten your hair using mayonnaise, Junior tries to the advice by covering his hair with a half-used jar of mayonnaise from his refrigerator. As he applies the sauce to his hair, he looks unpleased and almost disgusted by the grease he is applying as he reflects in the mirror mainly because the comb will not smoothly go through his hair, indicating that he has failed at his endeavor to straighten his hair and belong in society. The dual nature of the mirror is instrumental to show how on one side of the reflection Junior acting on his desire to straighten/whiten his hair while on the other side his disgust in the mirror emphasizes his own ambiguity in the whole socialization process.

This hair modification is an extension of bodily modifications that help racialized subjects change in order to better align their physical appearance with societal expectations of beauty that tend to whiten an individual. Women have long used their hair as both a way to resist and reproduce the societal expectations by both emulating male ideas of beauty in order to be taken more seriously but also having a casual feminine look to manipulate men. However, these efforts still re-inscribe the broader patriarchal ideas of femininity (Weitz 227). Black Venezuelan women use rhinoplasty at higher rates than their regional counterparts to augment their bodies in order to attain a beauty standard that is neither achievable nor healthy in order to have the right racial "look" (Gulbas 332). Moreover, black women in Venezuela have internalized these expectations of their nose that marks their physical attributes as "weaker" and "problematic" underscoring how race and beauty standards are intricately linked (333). Junior similarly has internalized these ideas both because of the female surroundings that re-inscribe these expectations onto him.

While placing the mayonnaise in his hair his mother bangs on the door asking what he is doing. Junior frantically attempts to take the sauce off but Marta manages to barge into the bathroom, picks him up and washes his hair out in the kitchen sink. After things calm down and all the mayonnaise is out of Junior's hair, the audience sees one of the few tender moments between Marta and her son. She caresses his hair telling him that there is nothing he needs to worry about and that his curls are also beautiful, and he should not try to change them. Junior finally asks, "But what do I do about my bad hair?" she simply replies by telling him, "Your hair is just curly." In Spanish, Marta uses the word "crispito" connotating an idea that the hair is hard or crispy although she articulates the message with the diminutive "-ito" it sends Junior the mixed message that he has been interpreting the entire film— his hair is bad. The scene also highlights the power dynamic with Marta placed almost above Junior as she looks down at him and he looks up almost telling his mother that he is acquiescing to her (or societal) demands of him. But, this places Junior in Bordo's "masculine double bind" with the added twist of his racialization. Society, both his mother and other females he sees, tells him his hair is wrong based on the way he behaves, and when he tries to correct course by straightening what he deems to be physically wrong with him he is told not to do it by the very people he sees rejecting him. For Junior, this masculine double bind is a sort of quadruple bind where his hair becomes both a reflection of his masculinity and his race in way that he does not seem to fully understand based on the mixed messages he is given.

The various scenes throughout the film where Junior faces a mirror echoes Lacan's "mirror stage" in the development of the *I*. Lacan explains that the mirror stage is where the developing child sees their image for the first time in a way that is not

contaminated by social expectations. However, as the child continues to develop and becomes cognizant of the social pressures for how to behave he compares the expectations to the mirror ego. As the development continues and the mirror stage comes to an end:

> this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge [*savoir*] into being mediated by the other's desire, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence due to the competition from other people, and turns the *I* into an apparatus to which every instinctual pressure constitutes a danger, even if it corresponds to a natural maturation process. (79)

Junior is clearly passed the mirror stage in Lacan's construction it does not stop his attempt to seek out what he views to be the appropriate image for society. Junior perpetually seeks the society's approval, something he never receives because of his mix-raced reality that underscores his underlying blackness. He never achieves the moment Lacan calls "*Thou art that*" (81) because the society does not want him to be what he is: not white. Moreover, when he stays with his grandmother and Carmen offers to straighten his hair, Junior is delighted, and she only blow-dries half his head due to the baby needing to be fed. Junior rushes to feed the child and the camera angle reflects Junior feeding the baby in a mother/feminine pose with his hair half straightened. Marta eventually returns and Junior rushes to wet his hair in order to undo the straightened hair. Junior looks at himself and turns his head to the side with the curls and a slight frown forms on his face (see Appendix, Figure 2). He slowly turns his head to the side with the straightened hair and slightly smiles achieving his goal (see Appendix, Figure 3).

Junior engages in Lacan's instinctual pressure because the feminine look on his male body is inherently dangerous since he is not performing his prescribed role. His final attempt at straightening his hair is towards the end of the film where after a side comment by his friend's mother who says the only way to take the curl out is through oil, Junior decides to to drench his hair with cooking oil. After smothering his head in oil, he attempts to comb his hair to confirm that his venture is fruitful and the comb glides through the hair to Juniors pleasure, smiling back at the mirror confirming his success compared to the unsuccessful mayonnaise endeavor. Yet, his pleasure is short-lived, and he walks around the apartment block with his new hair and school uniform and gets teased by some local boys that are seemingly his age. Shortly after, Marta obtains her old job, buys hair clippers and forces him to cut his hair. Junior repeatedly fails at obtaining his desired straightened hair since in every moment—putting mayonnaise, his grandmother's straightening and the oil—all lead to and ultimate defeat at the hands of Marta who halts his yearning for "good" hair.

Just like Junior attempts to straighten his hair throughout the film, Tomás slowly modifies his hair as the film progresses. He begins with braids in the beginning that seemed intricately designed on the top and the back that leads to five long braids. The side of his hair is buzzed off. Towards the middle of the film, after he meets his love interest and begins his lessons to style hair, he decides to use his own head as the place where he can practice. Tomás undoes his braids and buzzes his entire head in order to create a blank canvas for his future creations. After buzzing his head, he creates his first masterpiece on his head, almost declaring his new-found agency. Like in *Pelo malo*, where the reflection of Junior helps understanding the societal expectations of how he

needs to behave, in *La Playa D.C.* the mirror becomes more of microscope that closely examines Tomás' hair exploring the intricacies of his hairstyle. Rather than using the hair as a source of oppression and societal expectation, Tomás' hair in the mirror takes on almost clinical examination especially in the surgical precision that Tomás, along with Danny and Nelson sculpt the hair to have to achieve the desired look. Unlike Junior, where this sculpting is oppressive and serves as an attempt to enter the society that he so desperately wants to be a part of, changing hair style here becomes an artistic expression rather than an act of mimicry. While Junior's only goal is to have straight hair, Tomás wants his hair to be a form of expression with its intricate designs, fine lines, and shaded layers of hair. Tomás' hair is part of a ritual culminating with him shaving his entire hair off just before he goes off on the bus and leaves the city in order to start his own new career path where he can grow. After Jairo's death, Chaco gives Tomás his half of the money and tells him he expects to see him at the bus station the following day. Shortly afterwards, the scene moves to the same image from earlier in the film in the forest where their mother is braiding the little boy's hair. As the image comes into focus, Tomás reaches out for him to come over, reading the message that the mother has put in the braids (see Appendix, Figure 4).

After he reads the ancestral wisdom that is provided with the hair, Tomás goes back to the city, says goodbye to his little girlfriend by staring through the window. Tomás goes home, showers, and cuts his hair off completely. Whereas earlier in the film mirror shots were close-ups of the hair being trimmed, in this final mirror scene we see Tomás and his whole body reflected in the mirror showing how this man has completed his journey and can move in with his new career where he designs hair. For this young

man hair is a source of salvation and guidance that allows him to break from his urban surrounding and have an artistic outlet where he can express himself, make money, and obtain cultural pride proving how hair, dead human skin cells that have oversized societal meaning, can be a source of resistance against societal pressures.

Tomás' exceptional fate with hair is not the experience for many black men and it is especially not the case for Junior. From the beginning of the film Junior is, if not happy, content with his life, but as he grows over the summer, the audience begins to see how his attempts to straighten his hair in order to belong fail him. His hair becomes the main source of tension for the young boy between him and his mother that culminates with her forcing him to buzz his hair with clippers she acquired after obtaining her job back. After her first night on the job she returns home from working the night shift and makes Junior his favorite dish, fried sweet plantains. After he eats, she begins to pack his bag informing him that he is going to live with his grandmother to Junior's surprise and he begins to plead with her to let him stay. At this point she takes out the clippers and tells him that she needs to shave it all off and he asks, "but when it grows back?" and she simply nods her head indicating her disapproval. As he picks up the hair clippers he says, "I don't love you." And she replies "Neither do I." In his final act of resistance, he uses his stare to protest the cutting— a cutting of a racial existence and gendered exploration he is being told to shun— that he is being forced to commit and he uses his sole mechanism that he knows will provide him some support, his gaze. Marta, gazes back, almost defeated, recognizing that act that is taking place before her as her last effort to correct her son, while possibly recognizing that the long-term harm it will cause. When the scene is over, the film cuts to Junior's first day of school wearing the traditional

Venezuelan school uniform and students singing in unison. Except for Junior who stands with his mouth closed in silence. A boy who spent the bulk of the film trying to find his mother's love, to find acceptance, to find himself, is defeated by a system that tells him he cannot be his true self. A patriarchal system that ultimately always wins.

Conclusion

Hair can be defined as dead cells that our body uses for the regulation of heat (Byrd and Thorpe). For black communities, hair carries so much more weight. On the one hand hair can be a sign of inferiority both in beauty standards and in racial categorization. On the other, hair can be a source of black pride, a way to assert an ancestry that has been tortured, ridiculed, and negated in the Western world. But a third option is also present and that is hair can be both. Both a site of oppression and a site of pride for black men who know no other way. The two films in this chapter, together, show how hair can both subjugate in gendered and racial ways, but can also lift and guide those who seek its help. *La Playa D.C.* and *Pelo malo* provide two case studies on how hair is negotiated within social constructs that impose their limiting and stifling expectations on black male bodies that are not allowed to explore alternatives. While one film shows the positive possibilities of hair, the other film shows the harsh reality that many men face at an early age. While the kaleidoscope's lens revealed the academic and ontological imposition of the time on Manzano's body and work, in the second chapter the lens refocused to expose the limits of memory studies discourse surrounding black subjects in the Atlantic world. For this chapter, the lens exposes the in-between reality black men face that is both triumphant and defeatist at once, complicating the one-dimensional subjectivities

imposed on black subjects. In each case, the lens shifts and moves in relation to the global power structure revealing complex characters with complex realities.

In *Pelo malo* Junior desperately seeks the approval and love of his mother, a single mom who does not have the time, desire, or ability to allow her son to explore alternative ideas of masculinity. Being raised in an apartment block with little male models and a racial reality that rejects his dark body, Junior attempts to modify his hair based on socially constructed ideas of beauty which are defined by straighten—or whitened— hair. Junior is very aware of how his hair is read within society as inferior, unattractive, or "bad" and he attempts to modify his hair by using mayonnaise, oil, and with his grandmothers help, but all efforts fail. His mother is never too far off to squander what he desires, emphasizing societies constructions of how a boy should behave. Marta reads his behavior as effeminate which is not correct and tries to remedy his behavior with at times mean maneuvers. Her final overture succeeds, and Junior is defeated. Juniors experience is layered with both racial and gendered expectations that he attempts to navigate and negotiate but at the same time he never fully understands. The unsaid emerges as those expectations that Junior does not comprehend but knows he must overcome in order to survive. While his solution might not work in all contexts and with all subjectivities, the shifting nature of his problems espouses the kaleidoscopic reality for black subjects at-large.

Tomás is more fortunate in that although he too is in a precarious living situation, hair for him becomes less tinged with white cultural expectations of beauty, but rather, steeped in Afro-Colombian ideas of hair. His transformation as a man parallels various

hairstyle over the course of the film where he begins with braided hair and ends with a buzzed head, exposes how hair for him becomes a source of power. What is unique to Tomás is that, like Samson from the Bible, he gets his strength from his hair, but unlike Samson, Tomás is able to overcome the greater forces that want his demise. The spaces Tomás inhabits are also hospitable to his exploration since he also performs his masculine role, exerting his force over Jairo his younger brother and courting a girl from his area. The film is structure in a bildungsroman-esque fashion where the young apprentice ultimately finds his own path after he leaves his mentors. His older brother Chaco, and his hairy styling teachers Nelson and Danny teach the young boy how to design black hair with intricate designs and he leaves to start his own business. Having a source of income, a source of pride, and becoming a man all because of his hair.

In the end, both films expose how the bodily unsaid navigated and negotiated in a world that must constantly be read because it is constantly reading their bodies. Neither Tomás nor Junior were told how to be mixed-race or black or how they should want their hair to be styled, but they both understood the social expectations through stares, rejections, and images within society. Rather than showing how both films expose two sides of the same oppressive system, I have shown how both boys navigate the system so as to push against and reproduce socially imposed expectations. In doing so, there is no clear-cut answer to how to move against the white supremacy, but exposes how the solution is mixed, contextual, and individually driven. Like Alexander Wehiyle notes that black bodies are read with markers of inferiority, the bodily unsaid becomes a kaleidoscopic reality constantly evolving and changing to meet the needs of any specific expectation and location that sometime produces winners, like Tomás, and other times

bears losers, like Junior. For both Junior and Tomás the feel the oppressions that they do not necessarily see understanding their bodily negation and resisting silently through their actions. Both males had moments of triumph and moments of defeat but the overall arch of their trajectories differ widely revealing how black men are simultaneously wordlessly resisting the white hegemonic global system and the being subjugated by it in ways that are often unfulfillingly real moving away from zero-sum solutions.

Conclusion

> One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.
>
> —W.E.B Dubois, "The Souls of Black Folks"

According to W.E.B. Dubois, in enslaved persons' music, "…the slave spoke to the world. Such a message is naturally veiled and half articulated." Dubois underscores how Western epistemologies do not fully encompass the many different existences found in the black diaspora along with strivings to rip off their existential veil. These epistemologies are coupled with academic methods that attempt to understand the black experience, creating incongruencies because of the inability of the academics to fully comprehend these subjects. Black subjects in the Atlantic world must navigate, negotiate, resist, and survive a world that has been created as to subjugate their bodies. Manzano's rhetorical shifts, the characters in Díaz and Danticat's novels, and characters in the two films add to the existing Western discourse by not limiting these subjects to binaries not of their own making, but rather to much more encompassing subjectivities that expands the striving to survive. Here are three interconnected case studies that when read together expose the weaved reality of past traumas, the continued subjugation of black bodies, and the audacious desire to survive that the kaleidoscopic unsaid reveals, be it seen or heard. The kaleidoscope is instrumental throughout this project because it allows scholars to acknowledge the corrosive fixity of the global power structures and its imposition on black bodies, while also allowing for a space that moves, shifts, focuses and blurs lines of subjectivity that are too often one-dimensional and limiting. Where the kaleidoscope emphasizes the visual of Western ways of knowing and the fixed subjugations that come with it, the unsaid expands and connects to silent resistance and re-inscription endured by

the subjects studied. Together, the kaleidoscope and the unsaid allow for a malleability that re-imagines the stagnant reality of what oxymoronically but adequately reflects the reality these subaltern subjects face. These subjects attempt, with varying degrees of success, to make sense and survive a world that was neither created in their favor nor that they had a say in how it should be constructed. The incongruency in the kaleidoscopic unsaid reveal a multiplicity in subjective realities both tied to the global power structure yet also attempts to decolonized it at once.

The first shift of this optical lens focusses on the writing and academic discourse surrounding Juan Francisco Manzano, the first and only writer of an enslaved person's narrative in the Hispanic world. Although his text predates the other works in this project it certainly does not escape the academic expectations and impositions that are encountered in the late 20th and early 21st centuries across the region. Manzano lives in a time when black subjects were not afforded subjectivity, reducing them to objects. He did not have a canon to follow or a literary tradition to inspire. What he did own was a presence that came through his writing even with the mutilations that followed. By reading Manzano's work beyond the historical questions of truth and fact, the presence of a man emerges which echoes the striving that DuBois references. Expanding the scope of what a black writer can do, what he can resist, what he can present through the echo of writing refocuses the debate around agency and voice rather than if Manzano is in or out of the academic expectations he neither created nor properly espouses. Thus, this project creates an *and* to the discussion of Manzano as to push against the one-dimensional imposition of subjectivities on subaltern peoples. For this chapter, the echo provides the in-between nature of the unsaid in that it is linked to both the oppression of the other and

the resistance of the subject, simultaneously combatting the intellectual power structure. Instead of only seeing the way Manzano's work engages with the world through the lens of Sylvia Molloy or William Luis, engaging with the multiplicity in his narrative allows readers and scholars to reimagine how subjects of color voice their existence.

Shifting the kaleidoscope lens for the second chapter, Díaz and Danticat's works come into view to reveal how academic discourse does not fully articulate the memorial reality of black subjects in the Atlantic world. For the characters in *Oscar Wao* and *The Farming of Bones* their transnational realities force them to contemplate their unresolved reality. Belicia Cabral and Oscar De Leon live the vestiges of slavery, the slave trade, Trujillo's brutality, sexual violence, and gendered expectations on their bodies. For these characters, what was past and what is present is so muddled and intertwined that unlinking them does an injustice to their experience and creates a falsity of their reality. Similarly, Amabelle Desir's crossing of the river from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and the Parsley Massacre weaves together a trauma that sees no end. Amabelle relays her story with a malaise that is reminiscent of the unresolvability of past atrocities forcing her to find a peace from a past that is not clear and a present that is tenuous. The characters in these novels embody a nexus of black memory that is linked to the various forces disrupting the linear way memory is constructed under Western pressures. By examining memory, its multi-directionality and its multiple layers scholars can begin to understand how global power structures subjugate people of color beyond one-dimensional subjectivities. Like my reading of Manzano, the characters in this novel open up new ways of understanding that are more multifaceted and linked to, yet not solely dependent on, hegemonic cultural norms.

In the final chapter we refocus the kaleidoscopic lens to see the final case study of hair for two young black males in Venezuela and Colombia. Junior and Tomás both live the economic hardship and societal gaze that forces them into identities not of their own making. Junior, a young boy who lives with his single mother, understands, albeit in indirect ways, that society is expecting his brown male body to behave and be a certain way. As he desperately attempts to straighten his hair and seeks the love of his mother, and by extension society, we see a little boy who does not understand the norms he's encountering but is fully aware that he must change in order to survive. His mother reads his efforts as a sign of his sexuality, once again imposing on him an idea that he likely does not know himself; in the end, giving him an ultimatum that he must either cut his hair or live with his grandmother. In the end, Junior reluctantly concedes and the final scene shows his last protest of silence. While Junior's desires are squashed because of his blackened hair, Tomás uses his hair as a place of resistance amidst his black community. The trajectory of his hair from long, close braids to a buzzed head shows the possibility and hope for an adolescent who is entering manhood. Similar to Junior, Tomás navigates the labyrinth of social racial norms and economic stifling to find a way to survive. As he learns more about braids and cutting hair with his artistic designs, survives the various social land minds he encounters. In the end, his buzzed hair represents a new beginning, a rebirth of sorts, where he can now set up shop and find economic and social success in an urban desert that he calls home. For both Junior and Tomás we see the limitations of *mestizaje* in the Latin American reality where blackness is subjugated and black subjects navigate their survival. While both characters modify their hair based on the societal expectations placed on their bodies, they do so with two different ends. Junior's defeat

and Tomás' success underscores that for black subjects the world does not have clear winners and losers, but for both characters they have an unfinished sense of their future. The unsaid, just like the unsaid in chapters one and two, is both the unspoken social expectations placed on these two black bodies and their silenced resistance against them.

Together, this project reveals how the movement is inherent to the black experience in the Atlantic world linked to the many systems of oppression that abound. From object to subject, hauntings and trauma, and resistance in hair, the subjects in this project show that even in the most abysmal of situations they find ways to survive. While the solutions and articulations in this dissertation are not high flying feats they nonetheless underscore a survival of the everyday that often times goes unnoticed by those in the academy. Being black, or brown, or a woman or both does not mean only resisting in the way hegemonic norms dictate, but rather resisting in the way that seems necessary in the moment, in their subjectivity, and for their own personal gain. By discussing the various modalities at play I shed light on the problems of being a minoritized subject in the West. But the spotlight I attempt to show does not create a centerpiece for discussion but adds to the multiplicity that is inherent in our world and in the experience of these subjects. This project reflects the way these subjects move and shift is the way that world should see them and not in the singular one-dimensional subjectivity that is imposed on them. Reading Manzano beyond the historical and into the fictional, examining memory as both political and gendered, and seeing hair as a biological oppression and source of pride together point to, but does not complete, the whole of the subject. In their maneuvers they manage to create a silenced resistance to the oppression that they live.

While I look at the kaleidoscopic unsaid in these situations and in the context of the transnational Grand Caribbean, future research can uncover understandings for members of the LGBT community, Afro descendant populations in the Southern Cone, Mexico, and other parts of Latin America and enslaved person's narratives in the U.S. This framework can be used to also analyze the ways in which native communities engage with silences and unsaid in a system that also negates and oppresses their bodies in various North American and South American contexts. The rhetorical and bodily maneuvers the subjects in this project exercise show the ways in which they must both resist and re-inscribe the world around them to insert their presence. Other subjectivities in other contexts that underscore their will to survive should also be included in future study with the aim to bring a truer notion of self. The sad reality is that this is the world we live and suffer in and finding ways in which we can articulate who we are with, and against, the "master's tools" will improve the understanding of the academia. Instead of fashioning subjectivities with only Western means in mind, the kaleidoscopic unsaid assists in reading, hearing, and locating the Other in a less othered way.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Still from Arango Garcia, *La Playa D.C.* (0:12:42)

Figure 2. Still from Rondón, *Pelo malo* (00:25:42)

Figure 3. Still from Rondón, *Pelo malo* (25:56)

Figure 4. Still from Arango García, *La Playa D.C.* (1:19:29)